





Chapter 1 - Anguish of an adulterer

This is Greater London, a city where every item of the world gathers.

From the high-quality merchandise to worthless trash, from real to imitation, and fakes made with masterly workmanship so to be more exquisite than the original, and yet mysteriously, the people in this town act as if only real, genuine works exists here.

People here are separated into class by birth and upbringing, and no matter how much wealth or fame they gain along the way, they could not go up the ladder so easily. This is different than from the New World like when the wealthy could go bankrupt and the penniless strike a gold vein in a night. it is a shrewd empire that stubbornly protects its class society like there weren't ever any changes even though it was in this day of age, with whirling changes, such as running locomotives and gas lamps lighting up the night streets.

It was the first time for Lota to come to a country like that.

Because of the sunset and the little drizzle which was falling from the sky, the color of the streets appeared hazy and blurred.

One could say it had a long history or that the place wasn't trying to make a display of its glamorous wealth, but to Lota, she only thought it felt the place looked old and rustic.

She had been in London for a week now where the temperature was low and it was an unexpectedly cold late autumn, and the coat she immediately bought at an used-clothing store which had patches sewed all over it, could have made her look like a beggar.

Her hair tied up in a ponytail at the top of her head, was beginning to come apart, but she didn't care about her appearance in the first place on a normal basis.

Lota leaned against the wall at the corner of a street waiting with a rolled-up paper cigarette in-between her teeth, keeping her attention focused on a carriage that stopped to park in front of the building diagonally across from her.

It was a carriage that Lota had been keeping watch. She casually asked the driver about their destination and hurried to arrive to this location ahead of their arrival.

The figure who stepped out of that carriage was a young man in finely dressed clothing.

He wore a white high-collar shirt and white tie, with a black tail coat and dashingly stepped down onto the ground. From his top hat to the stick he gripped in his hand, one could tell at first glance that his clothing were high-class, supreme quality.

Lota fanned away the smoke that was fuming from her cigarette in front of her eyes and squinted to confirm the face of the young man.

He had an elegant, polished handsomeness like that of a noble and the hair that hanged down over his forehead was golden. There was no mistake, it was him.

A young boy who she met in a certain town in the south east end of America, was the leader of a gang made up of street children from the poor part of town. She heard that he was captured and hanged.

Until Lota came to London, she had believed that was true.

However, she witnessed him in this town.

And from that point, she investigated.

Earl of Ibrazel, Edgar Ashenbert. When she uncovered his name, she thought he was a completely different person.

From the beginning, the young boy was rumored of being born an England aristocrat, but she thought that kind of person wouldn't be in a place like the lower streets of America.

However, at this very moment, she was convinced it was him.

"That bastard, did he even steal a peerage?"

When it turned out that he was the earl she was looking for, she had to ponder what her next move should be.

"Lota, is that the man who kidnapped Betty?"

The figure who spoke was a tall, muscular, bearded man that stood right next to her.

"Well, there's no mistake that he's Earl Ashenbert."

"Then we should go capture him and make him confess where Betty is."

"Well, hold on just a moment. We need to investigate his surroundings a bit more."

There was someone still remaining in the carriage that the young blond man had just exited. He offered his hand and let his eyes follow a women stepping slowly and carefully out of the carriage.

Yes, the one who was accompanying him was a nicely dressed woman.

Just when the woman stepped down onto the ground, she friendly wrapped her arms around the young man's neck and kissed him without pausing to check who was watching.

After a passionate kiss, Lota watched the two disappeared into the building, and she let out a sigh about how he hadn't changed at all.

"....I can't believe it. That skirt-chaser!"

But the one to raise her voice wasn't Lota.

When Lota swiveled her neck around, she noticed it was a young girl who had just exited from a near-by book store and was standing in front of the show window.

Her age was around seventeen or eighteen. Her dull, reddish-brown hair was untouched, hanging freely, but it wasn't poorly kept or shabby, as it shined with gloss and had no frizzles or twirls. She was a normal girl wearing nicely kept clothes; however she didn't seem to be from a prestigious, aristocratic family.

Her reaction was that of someone who happened to witness her lover having an affair.

That bastard, he even laid his hands on a decent gal like this.

But she is the type that he would like, strong-hearted and cute.

The girl must have noticed that she was being watched and girl's eyes met Lota's when she turned around.

She must have remembered she let out a loud voice, widening her golden-green eyes in surprise and quickly dashed away in embarrassment.

A gray-haired cat went dashing after her.

"What a pity. She's probably going to cry because of him."

"Just like Betty?"

"Well, Betty wasn't the type of girl who would cry from something like that."

"But she was a real crybaby, and would cry all the time," he argued.

"That's her just pretending," Lota answered.

Lota dropped her cigarette to the ground and crumbled it with her foot and crossed her arms to think.

So he's the Earl Ashenbert? And Betty is supposedly with that man?

Actually, that was the part Lota couldn't believe.

There was no doubt that Betty had been completely head-over-heels about him, but after she found out about his bad-habits with women, Lota remembered Betty saying she wished that bastard would die.

How he flirted with her was fine and well thought out, but he shouldn't have had that much emotional attachment towards Betty.

Or perhaps, he could have found another use with Betty.

If that were so, then Lota was going to feel quite responsible.



"Lord Edgar, Miss Carlton has arrived."

"Is it that time of day already?"

Edgar returned home at daybreak and had just woken up now and took a bath.

The spirits he had been drinking since midnight had finally gone out of him and his head was starting to clear up.

He tried to remember what his plans were for today.

"Raven, how was Lydia's mood?"

"Normal, sir" replied Raven as he tied Edgar's necktie who was getting dressed.

This dark-skinned young man was the Ashenbert's valet and a loyal servant of Edgar ever since they were in America, and although he was asked everyday about Lydia's temper when she came to work in the morning but he didn't make an annoyed expression.

First of all, he had never shown a displeased face to Edgar, as he was the type to silently obey any kind of absurd command that he was ordered.

"Only she asked if you were late coming home last night."

"Why did that conversation come up?"

"Because she had just passed by me when I was carrying your change of

clothes."

Edgar slightly knitted his brows.

If he woke up late, then it could mean he came back home late.

It was almost like she suspected he had gone out to play for the night.

"I guess it could mean she wanted to see me as soon as possible."

He said that in order to deny the bad feeling in him.

"I have a feeling that might not be so," remarked Raven with no ill-will.

Edgar knew Raven wasn't able to understand the delicate works of the human heart that had the characteristic of running from the bad and painful, but regardless if he was childish, Edgar felt a little offended and responded with retaliation.

"It is so. Lately, it has been wonderful with Lydia. When I invite her out, she doesn't show dislike anymore, and even when I hold her hand, she doesn't get angry, and she even looks like she's enjoying herself when she's with me, so I think we've become like lovers a little more."

"That is quite different from your previous lovers."

Raven pointed out that part sharply, however, Edgar let his comment pass.

"Just last Sunday, the two of us went to church together. I went to a church. I patiently listened to the service and spent tea time at her house after that. I'm doing nicely with her father, and well, I still haven't brought up the topic of our engagement, but I think I have succeeded in showing my sincerity. Isn't that quite a pure and proper courting? If things keep going like this, I'm sure that Lydia would come to accept our marriage."

"Uh-huh."

Raven made a half-hearted reply, as he looked like he didn't think it would be that easy.

But then, Edgar suddenly realized that Raven would answer anything close to the truth that Lydia might ask him.

Edgar thought a reminder would be a good idea and turned to face his valet.

"Raven, it just happens that last night I was playing seven bridges at Slade's club until daybreak..."

"Don't you think it shouldn't be Raven who you should be making excuses to?"

The one who appeared was Ermine. She was Raven's older half-sister, a maid dressed in men's clothes, and interrupted in a sharp and clear tone as she walked over to Edgar.

"There was this female handkerchief in your coat pocket. What shall I do with this?"

".....Throw it away," he retorted carelessly and sat down on the sofa.

"Lord Edgar, since you had asked for Miss Carlton's hand in marriage, didn't you cut off your ties with other women? In order to win her trust, I heard that you were going to clean up your act."

"I cut them off. I just had a nice, lively conversation with the owner of that handkerchief, I haven't done anything guilty."

"Your bad habit has come out again."

Ermine peered down at the child-like face which looked like he was being scolded for mischief.

"It is a bad habit of yours to make excuses and make such irresponsible, careless choices. You do wonderful when you have relationships with several women, but when you start to do well with just one, why do you become so blind and careless?"

Most likely, what she was saying was exactly true so Edgar became irritated.

"You aren't thinking that if she were to notice, you would be fine if she comes to hate you, do you?"

"Are you my governess?"

He said that in order to shut up Ermine. It had an immediate effect.

Edgar stood up, feeling discouraged and miserable.

"How will you be spending your day today?"

Raven asked him a routine question as he was about to leave the room.

That's right, he was just trying to remember what his schedule was going to be for today.

And after he remembered, Edgar felt like sighing.

He was planning to invite Lydia to spend the day together outside. For Edgar, who felt that the two of them were starting to get along, there shouldn't have been any reason to change plans.

- But on the other hand, he continued to question himself if it was all right for things to go on like this.
- If they continue to work together, surely, he was going to get Lydia involved in his bitter strife.
- And yet, when he imagined if he could refrain himself from pursuing her, he simply felt he couldn't.
- Even if Lydia couldn't love him, he wanted her to stay by his side no matter what measures he had to take.
- Even if he rationalized about what the best interest was for Lydia, in the end, Edgar chained her to him using an engagement by his ego, and forced her to stay here.
- While he did that, he was also doing things which would be bad if they got into Lydia's ears.
- He didn't have any right to act like a good man and be hesitating.
- "We'll go with the plan. Ermine, take the housekeeper to Lydia's room."
- Fairies hate the intrusion of humans. And yet, they wish to interact with humans.
- They long for human food and just when you think that they stole someone's livestock, they would trick a traveler to lose their way.
- On the other hand, they would bring good fortune to humans at times.
- It was a wonder why fairies would want to a connection with humans like that.
- Even fairy doctors, specialists in fairies, had come to accept that was normal. That it was natural.
- That's why the job of a fairy doctor was to solve the troubles created when humans and fairies came in close contact with each other and not to eliminate the connection between them.
- However, perhaps humans didn't care less if fairies were to disappear. In this day of age of the 19th century, most people in society regarded fairies as beings from story books.
- However, as long as fairies desired to stay with humans, fairies doctors will continue to remain as the bridge between the two species.
- Even as they felt hurt at the fairies' tricks that periodically concluded bitterly

and were heart-breaking.

"A changeling, huh...." grumbled Lydia, in her work office at the Ashenbert manor as she read letters written from people troubled by fairies.

Lydia was the private fairy doctor of the Earl of Ibrazel (Fairy Kingdom), Edgar Ashenbert.

Just like his name, the Ashenbert family governed land in the fairy realm, and because the fairies have been familiarized with the family as the Blue Knight Earl, there were many fairies who still lived in the human realm.

That's why there were all kinds of questions flooded at Lydia asking for her advice.

Normally, the earl would use his magical powers to handle these fairies, but since Edgar couldn't even perceive fairies, Lydia had to take his place.

From all the Ashenbert family estates located all over England, Lydia received all kinds of letters seeking advice, but changelings were a very serious issue than what she had been dealing with until now.

"Is it a real changeling?"

Lydia just noticed that a gray-haired cat was sitting itself down on the edge of her desk speaking to her as he leaned down to read the letter.

"According to content of this letter, it seems real."

Uh-huh, mumbled the gray-haired cat Nico as he swapped his tail side-to-side and crossed his arms.

"A changeling happened at one of the Blue Knight Earl estates. Weren't those kinds of things admonished by one of the former earls in the past? There hadn't been any kind of letters regarding those kind of thing till now."

"Yes. But if this is true, then I need to hurry and get back their baby."

A changeling is when a fairy stole a human infant, and in exchange, they would leave behind a log, stone, an old-aged fairy, or sometimes an infant fairy.

There were numerous reasons why fairies wanted a human baby, they find them cute and desire to raise them themselves or they were forced by a demon to bring them as a sacrifice.

At any rate, from the older days, it was common to put charms on the baby's cradle to ward off dark forces so that the baby wouldn't be stolen by fairies, but

presently, those traditional customs had become forgotten.

First, Lydia needed to learn about this land as much as she could. However, this was about a land that was Edgar's estate. She would have to ask him what his thoughts were on this, but that it made Lydia become drastically depressed.

".....Why on earth would I have to be in a bad mood when I think about him."

She remembered about the incident that happened yesterday.

About the seductive-looking woman who carried a dreary yet lovable air about her.

And their kiss.

If that was the kind of kiss lovers shared, then when Lydia had her lips lightly brushed against his, it must have been a kiss to give to a baby.

"Calm down, Lydia. You shouldn't be surprised about that happening now. Actually, I'm more surprised that we haven't witnessed such an obvious scene like that until now."

He was right.

There is nothing between Edgar and me.

Even if I saw that scene, there was nothing for me to be flurried about, repeated Lydia to herself.

"An obvious what?"

At that voice, Lydia swiftly straightened up and placed her hands on top of her thighs before she gave someone time to catch her off guard.

"Good morning, Lydia, you're so beautiful today. I'm a blessed man to be able to see you everyday like this."

Edgar came striding into the room wearing a pleasant smile on a face and walked over to Lydia.

"Your hair is still damp," Lydia pointed out.

She said that hinting how late he came home last night.

"I couldn't wait till I was completely ready and so I came to see you as quickly as possible."

"You don't have to pay me any respects, just get some rest if you're tired."

"I'm not tired at all. Last night I was just having a little fun with a game at Slade's club."

He brought out the name of the high-class club exclusively for men, possibly claiming that he hadn't any female contact last night.

"I do hear there are angry wives upset at their husbands who stay out all day and night at those kind of places and don't come home. But if you are worried about that happening, then I promise. After we marry, I won't have you feeling lonely."

"I am not worried and we aren't getting married. You are free to go to any clubs or any woman's house as you please."

"Are you perhaps mistaken? I only have eyes for you and I've decided I will only get aroused by you."

"I said you don't have to!"

She couldn't hold back from getting hot-tempered, slammed her hands on top of the desk and leaned herself forward, but then she was only kissed on the forehead.

I-if I lost temper now that will only be doing what he wants.

Lydia repeated that to herself in her head and took a deep, calming breath.

Recently Lydia finally began to understand that Edgar would interpret them as a pair of happy lovers teasing one another, even when they had interactions that made Lydia obviously uncomfortable.

That's why when she was approached by him too personally and she made a big reaction, it only made him happier.

"M-.....more importantly, there is a matter of grave importance happening on one of your estates."

Lydia calmly brought up a business topic.

"This matter is much more important. Listen carefully, Lydia, I need you to hurry and go to Windsor with me. You will come with me, won't you?"

Since he made such a serious face, she couldn't help but ask "What happened?" to him.

"We need to hurry, so I'll explain in the train. Harriet will help you get prepared to go."

When Lydia switched her attention towards the door, Harriet the housekeeper was holding a dress, and blocking the exit with her round body.

Whenever Edgar would dress Lydia up, his underlying intentions was to take her out to places to gatherings and show her off. It wasn't anything important at all. "I'm not going; I'm busy as it is....."

Lydia stepped back as she was struggled to think of a way to escape, but when she bumped up against someone with her back, she turned to look behind her and saw it was Ermine looking down at her.

"I'm terribly sorry, Miss Carlton. Please follow Lord Edgar's request."

Even if she spoke politely, Ermine didn't show any signs of allowing Lydia to escape as she clenched Lydia's shoulders.

"Lydia, don't forget about this as well."

Just when Lydia felt him lifting up her hand, he had slipped on a moonstone ring onto Lydia's ring finger.

It was an engagement ring which possessed fae magic. Probably because the moonstone power would awaken, once it was put on, only Edgar, who was recognized as her 'engagement' partner by this ring, could remove it.

However, this should have been left in the care of Lydia and she had kept it at her house.

"Co-Coblynau! You did this!" screamed Lydia, who spotted the small, mining fairy on top of her desk, pushing his hand under its triangular-shaped hat to scratch his head.

"Yes Miss, My lord told me to bring the ring to him."

This fairy took care of maintaining this mysterious moonstone and didn't understand that the engagement between Lydia and Edgar was fake.

He was hoping that their marriage was read for the sake of the moonstone jewel he was in charge of caring.

"Well, all should be fine. At least you should wear it when the two of you go outside together," said the fairy.

"Now then Lydia, if you would accompany me I will take if off afterwards."

".....Scoundrel!"

"Now, Miss Carlton, let's quickly get you changed."

Lydia's arms were tightly held back by Harriet too, so now she was like a fish on a cutting board.

"My lord, would you please head out of the room."

Just when the housekeeper was about to take off Lydia's plain, day-clothes, Harriet noticed that Edgar was still in the room.

"Oh, so I can't stay, can I?"

"Of course you can't, you pervert!" screamed Lydia whose bubbling rage finally exploded.

After they headed upriver of the banks of Thames from London, they arrived at a peaceful landscape surrounded by forest and water.

This peaceful, quiet town was home to a castle of the Royal Family from the old days and the scenery of trees set in autumn colors reflecting on the water surface was a wonderful sight that could put anyone in awe.

The weather was also beautiful, Lydia wore a blue dress the same color as the Irish-blue colored sky, and when they glided across the water on a small boat to reach the noble's castle located near the riverside, her irritation had also soothed down.

Edgar explained that a friend of his was hosting a party to announce his engagement.

Lydia decided to hide her irritation to the back of her mind because couldn't keep a scowl on her face at such a happy occasion.

She sneaked a glance over at Edgar. She didn't know how long he had been gazing at her, but when their eyes met, he made a joyful smile.

Lydia couldn't stop from smiling and she thought it was because of the peaceful and calming ray of the sunlight. The sparkling light

dancing along the surface of the river made everything seem like a dream.

Their small boat glided up alongside the pier, which was located on one corner of the estate's garden where numerous people were enjoying a garden party, and the female visitor's dresses looked like flowers blooming on top of the spacious grass lawn.

While Lydia had her eyes distracted by the colorfully dressed guests around her, when she came to her senses she finally noticed that she was walking with her hand settled onto Edgar's arm.

I have to let go, she thought, but it was much easier for her to leave her hand

resting on him to walk in a dress that dragged along the top of the grass, so she decided, oh well.

The more she put her guard down little by little, she was starting to feel it was natural to be with him.

She wondered if that meant she was falling into his trap.

Lately, even Lydia's father wasn't saying any criticism towards Edgar. But then again, that could be because no one brought up the subject about marriage in front of him.

"These kinds of garden parties are quite nice. The sky and the wind are congratulating the two. What do you want to do at ours?"

As she gazed up at his shining golden hair and ash mauve eyes, Lydia actually thought why he was looking back at her with such a happy face.

It was like he was feeling such happiness at being with her from the bottom of his heart. And it was like he was truly gazing at his beloved lover.

"We have to make sure that your fairy friends would be able to attend. And prepare herb sweets and plenty of fresh milk."

".....Yes."

"Really?"

"Huh? Oh, no! I was just, thinking about something right now."

"Too bad. My heart was beating so hard just now."

Most likely, Lydia was the one whose heart was beating more rapidly.

She had a strange feeling that they were going to get engaged at this rate and that they were going to hold a party.

Lately, at certain moments for some reason, this kind of feeling would arise in her. She didn't know what to do with the tingling sensation that was festering in the depths of her heart.

"These two are the star of this event," explained Edgar.

When Lydia was told that, she managed to hide her nervousness and walked alongside Edgar up to a finely dressed man and woman.

"Congratulations on your engagement," said Edgar.

"Thank you Edgar, I'm happy you were able to attend."

Surprisingly the friend of his turned out to be the man.

"This is my fiancée, Jane," said the man.

When the man introduced the woman next to him, Edgar greeted her in a normal manner and gave her his tributes, and since he didn't even show a hint of flirting with her, it gave Lydia a feeling of strangeness.

When she thought about it, it would be outrageous and rude if he would flirt with the fiancée of his friend, but because his greeting was so brief and simple, in contrast, it made her be suspicious.

"So, Edgar, introduce me to your fiancée."

Hold on a moment, panicked Lydia. It seemed definite that she was already his fiancée.

However, she was wearing an engagement ring so she couldn't deny it, so Lydia tried to slip on a smile somehow, and greeted the couple.

"I heard that you haven't announced your official engagement yet, right? When do you plan to?" asked the friend.

"We haven't decided yet. To tell you the truth, I still haven't gotten the approval from her father," replied Edgar.

"Oh, my, are you being opposed?" questioned the bride-to-be.

"I'm just carefully waiting for the right time. It seems an aristocrat can't be trusted that easily."

It isn't any aristocrat, but 'you' can't be trusted.

"You may be right; it's easy to be misunderstood if you have a long history of female relationships."

His is really long.

"But, I'm thinking if I sit down and have a good talk with him, my feelings will come through. Lydia, I promise to convince him, so please believe in me. Let's forget about the obstructions before our love today and get a share of their happiness and enjoy the rest of the day."

The obstruction to my love is you!

"Oh, yes, please enjoy yourselves. Oh, Miss Carlton, I also happen to be from the middle-class. Marriage of social class differences would make anyone nervous, but I'm sure we'll be able to help give each other advice from now on. Would you become my friend?" "Huh? Oh, yes..."

The woman held Lydia's hand, so she couldn't refuse and nodded.

"Thank goodness. I was suddenly brought into the upper-class, so I was frightened at the thought of not being able to fit-in."

Lydia felt a prickle of guilt, and became exhausted at the realization that this was also a part of Edgar's plan.

It seems like dragging the dressed-up Lydia around wasn't his primary objective. He was certainly narrowing the range of choices left for Lydia. So that she was only left with a future of there being no problems if she just got married to Edgar.

It even appeared like he was preparing friends for her from the upper-class so that she wouldn't feel lost.

"Oh, Miss Carlton, I would love it if I could introduce you to some of my friends."

It looked like for the mean-time, Lydia was going to get away from the calculating Edgar and she decided to follow the woman's lead.

As they kept walking, it wasn't long till they stepped out of the party grounds and had entered into a grove of trees.

Just when she was wondering why the woman's friends would be in a place like this, she spotted two young men holding wine glasses in their hands.

It seemed like the two of them were quite drunk.

"Hey you two, you're drinking too much."

The woman spoke to the two men. What, her friends aren't women?

"Hey there, Jane, it seems like you've brought along a cute friend."

"Hey, miss, join us for a drink."

One of them came walking over to Lydia and grabbed her arm. She was overwhelmed with fear and disgust at the smell of spirits.

"No thank you. Excuse me but I'll be going."

She tried to go back, but he wouldn't let go. She turned to look back at Jane for help, but she turned her back on her suddenly and started to walk off.

Lydia panicked.

"Miss, say something to these two. Aren't they your friends?"

"Why refuse; you should join them. It seems like they want to enjoy the company of a woman."

"Wh-what are you saying? Why are you saying such a horrible thing."

"I don't know, there's something loathing about you."

Huuh?

After the woman disappeared beyond the trees, Lydia's temper reached its boiling point, and she turned around to face the men.

"I said let go of me!"

"You're sure energetic. Although I don't hate a chick like that."

The man wrapped his arm around her shoulder, making her grow even more frightened and in reaction, her hand striked at him.

"Ow! What do you think you're doing!"

The man that her hand slapped was made to go into a rage and shoved Lydia away.

Lydia was forced to slam up against a near-by tree, which secured a nasty knock on her forehead that made her slump down to the ground.

"Why don't the two of you stop there," interrupted a deep voice.

When she lifted her head up, she saw that there was a senior gentleman standing in front of her. He stood with his spine standing straight up and lifted up his irritated face deeply lined with wrinkles and released a bodily presence that would make any young man back down.

"Using violence against a woman, have you lost your honor of a British gentleman."

He glared at the two men with ferocious eyes, and they must have decided it was reckless to cause a commotion, so they went dashing off in the other direction.

The elder gentleman turned around down at Lydia and hushed in a completely different, gentle tone.

"Are you all right, young lady? Are you hurt anywhere? Ahh, its best that you stay still for a bit. I'll go and call for your escort. What is your escort's name?"

She felt a little resistance in calling for Edgar. However, Lydia didn't have any other acquaintances here. She couldn't cause any more trouble to this elder

gentleman that she met for the first time.

".....I'm sorry for the trouble. I came with Earl Ashenbert...."

When she said that, she saw he made a faint frown with his brows.

"Earl Ashenbert? Pardon me but what would be your name?

"My name is Lydia Carlton."

"Lydia! What happened? Are you all right?" shouted a familiar voice.

Lydia saw Edgar come running towards their direction, so she didn't noticed the elder gentleman having a hard thought.

"Yes, I was just caught in a little trouble, but this gentleman helped me."

As Edgar gave his thanks to the gentleman, he gently passed his hand over Lydia's forehead with a worried look.

"It looks like there's a scratch. I came to take a look because Jane returned to the party by herself, what on earth happened?"

"I can see that you passed this young lady over to your male friends," said the elder gentleman.

Lydia thought the only reason for that happening was because of this philanderer in front of her.

"Edgar, you have flirted with her before, haven't you?" she asked.

"What? Why?"

"And then you did something to hurt her, didn't you. That's why she did this horrible thing to me..."

"I didn't do anything. I haven't sold my honor to make me go flirt with a friend's lover," declared Edgar.

"Then why would something like this happen!" cried Lydia.

The elder gentleman had been listening their conversation, then opened his mouth to interrupt them again.

"I had been dreaming of marrying a noble, but just when I was sure I caught one, he turned out to be the younger son. I didn't know that he had already decided to depart and work in Egypt. It's all too late now,' was what the young ladies had been discussing just earlier."

Feeling disgusted, Lydia let out a deep sigh.

Even if it was the son of a noble family, any sons other than the eldest needed a

job make a living. So there was quite a difference between the younger and eldest son who would inherit the family title, lands and fortune.

The woman must have decided that Lydia, who was from the same middleclass, was assured a future of becoming a countess, and that was the reason why she felt a 'loathing' towards Lydia.

Edgar helped Lydia up onto her feet and she managed not to swoon, but just like her wine-stained dress, Lydia's mode was in a miserable state.

I had to go through a horrible experience like this because of a ridiculous reason like that?

This is why she didn't like going to gatherings with a lot of people.

When Lydia was younger, gatherings was a place where people whispered about her behind her back, however after she came to London and had more opportunities to meet new people, her guard must have been down because when Edgar would escort her, there wasn't anyone who would say nasty things that she could hear.

"Lord Earl Ashenbert, I'm sorry this is right after the misunderstanding has been solved between you and your fiancée, but I have a question I would like to ask of you."



With a dubious expression, Edgar looked over to the elder gentleman.

"What has happened about the marriage between you and my granddaughter?" asked the man.

Blood boiled in Lydia's head again.

"Edgar! Y-you of all people..."

"Wait just a moment; I don't know what you're talking about."

"Exactly how many have you proposed to?" grumbled Lydia.

"You're mistaken. Besides, may I ask who you are exactly," asked Edgar after he turned to the man.

When the elder gentleman introduced himself, Edgar straightened himself like he was a little surprised.

"His Excellency the Grand Duke of Cremona? Weren't you in exile in the Netherlands?"

The Principality of Cremona was a country name that even Lydia had heard of

when she studied history, but she could only remember that it was a small country in the south of Europe.

If he was in exile then that meant there could have been a revolution in his country or something. Or perhaps, they could have lost in a war. Recently, there was said to be some noticeable political movements in the European countries, and she has heard that there are quite some number of nobles who fled to England from the continent.

"You are well informed. Did you hear that from my grandchild?"

"I don't know your grandchild. When you're in society, your name will eventually come up."

"Young Earl, I don't believe that the London society would still be talking about Cremona that disappeared seventeen years ago. I have been living quietly in the Netherlands till now. What did you do with Charlotte? After you sent me that ridiculous letter claiming that you'll be marrying her, I didn't hear anything from you. And after I came all the way here to England, you're escorting a different lady as your fiancée."

The elderly man's voice was calm, but his tone of voice didn't hide his anger towards Edgar.

"Letter? Are you saying that it was a letter from me?"

"When we were able to flee with just our lives, Charlotte was only three years old. She should have headed to America with my daughter and her husband, but their ship went shipwreck and I had thought everyone had died. However, it had said in the letter that only Charlotte had survived, and you were going to take her back as your bride to your country."

Edgar suddenly made an intensely stern face.

Did he have something that came to mind?

"In other words, you didn't know that she was alive until you read that letter....?"

"I would have no way of knowing."

Edgar thought for a moment and then spoke again.

"Then, why did you believe just by reading a letter that your granddaughter would be alive?"

"There was stamp pressed on it with a crest ring that only my grandchild should have had. What was the meaning behind sending along a wooden doll that was wearing a wedding gown?"

It's a changeling, whispered Lydia.

"Changeling?"

The Grand Duke looked over towards Lydia.

"Uh, it is a fairytale well-known in Britain. A fairy would steal a human baby; in exchange they would leave a wooden doll. Even in cases when they take adults, there are times when they would leave behind similar replacements, so I think it's the same case with your granddaughter....."

Because when it was fairy magic, leaving behind a replacement in the human realm enabled the fairies to keep their human in the fairy realm.

Suddenly having fairies come up in the conversation only made the Grand Duke make a puzzled face.

"The work of a fairy, you say. This must be one of your jokes as the Blue Knight Earl. So you've stolen my granddaughter and made it appear like she was taken to the fairy world. When I investigated this, there truly was a young girl named Charlotte in America, and evidence she was kidnapped by somebody. Lord Ashenbert, your family apparently is described by the London society as one with ties with fairies. It had taken me time to uncover that the name of Blue Knight Earl in the letter was a noble Lord Ashenbert in England, but do you it is rude of you to not go by your real name?"

Edgar appeared inattentive, and it wasn't clear if he was listening to the Grand Duke's harsh claim.

He might actually know what the man was talking about, suspected Lydia.

Because, the man claimed that his granddaughter was in America. Although America was a big and spacious country, she couldn't think that Edgar was surprised at hearing the Grand Duke's name just because of his social status.

Even though he was a Grand Duke, he lost his position, so it was a wonder why Edgar, who was of the lost son of a duke family, would become more respectful to the man.

And furthermore, before he inherited a title as earl, Edgar had been calling

himself by the name Ashenbert to Lydia. He used that name while he was in America, so there could have been the possibility where he used it to gain the favor of women.

If he knew that the kidnapped girl was the Grand Duke's granddaughter, he might have found a use in her as he desired power.

However, Edgar denied it - plain and clear.

"Either way, I have nothing to do with your case. It is unfortunate that I cannot help you."

He tried to leave that spot with Lydia. However, the elder man put his stick on the ground in front of their feet to block their path.

"If you had no intention of marrying her, then what did you do with my grandchild? You better not have made it so I will never see her....."

"If you dare to make any more false allegations, I will accept it as insult."

When two nobles who cared about honor started a fight with each other, it couldn't end with simple exchange of foul name calling. Lydia couldn't understand that as a commoner, how they would start a fight and skip the option of using fists but jump to kill each other, but she could understand that this was a delicate situation which could turn explosive at any moment.

In panic, Lydia pushed Edgar's back.

"Um, please excuse us for now. I will thank you on another occasion."

As she said that and succeed in separating Edgar from the Grand Duke by taking him away from that spot, she felt exhausted when they stopped to take a breath by the riverbank.

"Why did you have to talk to him like that? If it was a misunderstanding, then you could just explain and make everything clear, then there could have been something you could do to help him."

Edgar turned around dissatisfied.

"No one would want to get involved with someone else's business."

"You say that, but your name was used."

"If it was two years ago, then it happened before I became earl."

Lydia tilted her head.

"Two years ago? The Grand Duke of Cremona didn't say when the letter arrived

to him."

"....He said so. Didn't you hear him?"

Edgar quickly turned his face away, and that made Lydia more and more suspicious of him.

If it wasn't her misapprehension, there was something Edgar knew about that the Grand Duke didn't mention. Saying it was two years ago was much too precise.

Was he hiding because he had a guilty conscience?

Did he make a promise to marry her?

Was that to use her? Is she still alive?

She wasn't able to ask him, and so turned her head down and fell silent.

Edgar went up to the river and soaked his handkerchief in the water.

"Lydia, I will take care of him myself. We already have enemies as it is."

He placed the cold handkerchief against her forehead. The cut she obtained when she was knocked up against the tree trunk tingled and ached.

Her reddish-brown hair got unraveled and fell down over her face. Edgar combed her locks up with his fingers, grooming it over her ear like he was styling her hair.

His fingers touching her, made her feel goose-bumps.

Out of the blue, the scene that she saw yesterday flashed in her head.

She should have been used to being touched, but Lydia couldn't stop but pull her body back.

"I can't understand people well. The reason I had to experience this was idiotic and you are keeping all kinds of secrets from me."

"Secrets?"

"......You really know what happened, don't you? About the Grand Duke of Cremona's princess."

"Are you even suspecting me?"

"Was there a number of women who you took advantage of by bringing up marriage?"

"You are the first one that I proposed to."

"Liar. Even today, you were lying since this morning."

"What part is a lie?"

Like he was offended, Edgar knit his brows.

"It was a lie that you were playing games at the club."

"It's true. You can make sure with Slade."

"It's easy to have someone go along with your story."

"Then what do I have to do to have you believe me?!

"I won't believe you. Because I saw it. You were kissing a beautiful woman, and you went into her house with her."

There was a period of silence. However, Edgar's expression didn't change, so she wasn't able to decipher what he was thinking.

"That....., was most likely a kiss when you greet"

"No matter how childish I am, even I could tell it wasn't something like that."

"That happened out of the spur of the moment, nothing more than that. I came out of her house immediately afterwards, and I haven't done anything else."

"I-I wasn't asking you that. Because I'm not your real fiancée!"

"But you're angry."

That's right. She shouldn't care and yet it was a mystery why she was angry about it.

Even in regards about yesterday, it put her in a foul mood for a moment, but once she cooled down, she came to the conclusion that it had nothing to do with herself.

And she intended on forgetting about it, but when she suddenly did remember, she wasn't able to hold back her irritation.

"Is it strange for me to get angry? It's rude and improper of you to do that as you're trying to flirt with me.In the end, it means you're making fun of me as well."

"I am serious about you. But at the moment, it's just my one-sided feelings. There are times when even I feel lonely."

"So you're saying that anyone would work for you?"

"It was just something for her to pass the time. She's sure to have forgotten my name by now."

The more he talked in defense of himself, the more she couldn't understand

and grew more frustrated.

".....I understand. You're just someone who can't become serious about anyone!"

Letting that come out, Lydia pushed away the handkerchief and started to walk off.

"Why are you being so stubborn? I show you my serious feelings, and yet how am I supposed to show my seriousness even more than now?"

"What do you mean stubborn. I can't see your sincerity because you don't have any in the first place!"

"Lydia!"

Her arm was tugged strongly, so she felt some pain, but more than that, she sensed Edgar was feeling upset with her, and it suddenly made Lydia nervously worried.

Did I say something horrible by claiming he wasn't able to be serious about anybody?

But Edgar was just too irresponsible and dishonest.

He was doing things that made her not believe him.

Even if she tried to shake away his grip, he didn't show any signs of letting go.

His ash-mauve eyes glared at her challengingly. Lydia felt she would lose if she turned her eyes away, so she glared back at him.

He leaned his face towards her, to which she barely managed to speak with a trembling voice.

"......Stop. You do something like this while you're irritated at me?"

As if giving up, but not hiding his irritation, Edgar slovenly let Lydia go.

"I...., am going home," she murmured, as she tried to control her nervous state of mind. Her dress had become a mess, so she didn't have any nerve to go back to the party area.

"All right. Let's head home."

"I want to go home alone."

"I can't let you go back by yourself from Windsor."

"Then I'll go back with Ermine."

To tell the truth, Lydia felt nervous even in that, as it seemed like she was being

monitored by Edgar, but in order to have him take off the moonstone ring, she didn't want to continue disputing with him.

Chapter 2 - Pirates have come!

Edgar sneaked out of his bed chamber during the late hours of night and was stepping down the stone stairs to the basement on the north-side of his palace home.

The candle he held in his hand flickered from the wind blowing from an opening somewhere and his shadow jerked and twitched like it was an animal with a will of its own.

He paid care so that the light wouldn't blow out by guarding the candle from the winds blowing in from the cracks and opened the lock of the door at the end of the path.

When he entered, there was another door at the end.

After he opened the next one, he finally was able to see the large star sapphire that sparkled like a cross-shaped star against the indigo blue sky.

It was the jewel that possessed fairy magic, and went by the name Merrow's star, and the sword that had the jewel framed was a gift bestowed by the King of England along with a peerage to a man named Lord Blue Knight who later became the Earl of Ibrazel.

Because Edgar had gotten that title, he was acknowledged as Earl by this country and live here.

It was thanks to the fairy doctor Lydia's help that he was able to get his hands on the sword that was protected by the merrows and be able to survive.

Because Edgar wasn't able to solve the riddle puzzle that was set by the fairies in order so that the sword would rightfully reach the hands of the heir of the Ashenbert family.

From the beginning, the merrows knew that Edgar wasn't born from the Ashenbert family, and yet they granted him the sword.

That was because they understood that the bloodline of the Ashenberts had come to an end.

However, Edgar only inherited the peerage and name of earl. He didn't have the

magical power that every lord of the house in this family possessed as the Earl of the Fairy world.

It didn't seem like a problem at first, but at the moment, it had become his weakness. Because his nemesis possessed magical powers.

The organization which was headed by a man named Prince had murdered Edgar's family and kidnapped him as a child and robed his freedom.

He led Raven and Ermine and a number of his comrades and managed to escape from Prince's headquarters, but almost all of his comrades was killed.

Nevertheless Edgar had survived, obtained the peerage of earl and was secured his foothold and organized his revenge against Prince, but his most biggest concern was a man named Ulysses who worked as the henchman for Prince.

He was able to subdue and control fairies.

Despite that, Edgar wasn't even able to perceive fairies with his eyes.

He couldn't possibly fight against Ulysess.

Picking up the sword, he unsheathed it.

The perfectly polished silver blade had a razor-sharp edge, giving it an astounding impression as a sword from the Middle Ages.

"Hmm, so this is the sword of the Blue Knight Earl. Goodness, it is a magnificent work of craftsmanship."

A voice had echoed through the room, but Edgar didn't see any body. However, he was familiar with the fairy who came to stay with Lydia.

"Coblynau? Don't you stay at Lydia's house when it's dark?"

"Well, I drank too much with the hobgoblins here, so I missed my chance to go home with her."

A wine bottle cork, which shouldn't be in this room, was twirling around in a circle on the table where he set down his candle. That was where the coblynau was standing.

According to Lydia's explanation, he was a small fairy with a red face, button nose and bushy hair. Edgar heard he wore a triangular hat and dressed in clothing like a mining worker, so Edgar's image of the fae was similar to a dwarf that came out of a picture book.

"If I am correct, you are quite the expert in jewels. What is your opinion about

this star sapphire? Normally, the star inside the stone should be three lines of light crossing over each other in the middle, but because I became earl, it has turned into a simple cross. It's said that the star sapphire's three lines of light represent hope, trust and destiny. With one of those lights missing, would that mean this sword and I are missing something."

"Oh, no, this has the magic of the merrows cast upon it. When time and circumstances permitted it, the light of the star had changed shape before. What I can tell is that this is missing nothing. Why, it's absolutely perfect, Lord Earl, it is a sword that inflicts death to its enemies and heals its allies."

Now that Edgar had thought about it, he remembered that this sword wasn't able to draw blood from any of the descendants of the Blue Knight Earl. And during the middle ages, a sword was considered sacred. There was superstition that when you lay a sword against your injuries, it would heal the wounds.

As he was thinking, Edgar pressed the tip of the blade against his finger.

The surface of his skin was punctured through and a small dew of blood came oozing out.

It was supposed to be a sword that had become Edgar's, but he wondered if it had seen through me, knowing that as the earl, he was an imposter.

However, Edgar didn't care if this sword didn't acknowledge him. More importantly, there was something he wanted to know.

"Coblynau, when you say enemies, does that include non-human?"

"Well, yes of course. It's said that past generation Blue Knight Earls had driven out evil fairies from his lands with it."

As Edgar anticipated, this sword was a weapon used against fairies. But he was unsure if it could cut fairies if he used it.

"Would do let me practice with you?"

After Edgar said that, the bottle cork immediately fell down and the presence of the coblynau disappeared.



There had been times in the past when Lydia felt awkward around Edgar, but she couldn't allow that awkwardness to make her skip work.

Just like normal, Lydia came to work on time today.

Because she was accompanied him to Windsor yesterday, she couldn't continue her work, now she needed to quickly investigate about the troubling changeling case.

"Miss Carlton, this area seems to be the problem."

The butler Tomkins spread out a map over the table.

She was reluctant to ask Edgar about this, so she decided to ask the butler's help instead.

She felt terrible for giving extra work to Tomkins, who took care of all the business affairs of the Ashenbert family and managing all the household servants, and open up his schedule for her, but he show any unpleasantness and gathered all of the necessary paperwork Lydia needed.

The land was a small town located on a hilly area on the coasts of Yorkshire.

"Is it a very particular place?" she asked.

Since most of the Blue Knight Earl estates in England were put in the family's care because they couldn't be managed under a human lord.

Most likely, this place had many fairy clan residents as well, and those residents were the cause behind the troubles, but that might not be the only reason.

"Fluorites are mined here. Blue Johns are the most heavily mined gemstones in England, and these are a reddish-purple. The ones called Freya are rare gemstones with a shine within them like the flame of a fire, but there is no record of them being mined for the past three hundred years. It seems they are an extremely hard find."

"So normal gems can still be found. But there hasn't been any shipments of them for more than ten years," said Lydia as she read the records.

"Every year, it is decided to mine only a limited amount. But lately, I hear that even when they mine, good quality gems that could be put on the market are not found. The number of miners has also decreased. They must be in the city factories where they can make more money."

"Why is there a limit on the amount that can be mined?"

"That was decided by a previous earl who made a trade with the fairies. It is a minimal amount that wouldn't starve the town residents even in the year of bad harvest. You couldn't call it a wealthy town, but it hadn't suffered from any famine. If they were allowed to extract as much as they pleased, I'm sure that the stones would have dug out long ago, so that could have been the cause of discord between the fairies."

However, a changeling happened in this town.

And ever since Lydia had been employed, she was also surprised that this was the first contact from this town asking for help.

There hadn't been any issues all this time, and yet, how could there be a changeling happening all of a sudden?

While Lydia was in deep thought, the door slammed open and Nico came racing in.

"Ahhh, I said stop it!" he cried.

Even if he was in a panic, Nico hadn't forgotten to run on his hind legs.

"I said it would be fine if I could use just the tip of your tail."

The one who came following in after him was Edgar. And for some odd reason, he had the merrow's sword in his hand.

"Don't kid me. I would never allow my beautiful tail be chopped off!"

As Nico cradled his fluffy tail in his arms, he went diving under the table cloth.

"Come out, Nico. I'll give you anything you want to eat."

"I will never trade my tail for food!"

"Won't it just grow back?"

"I'm not a lizard!"

Giving no mercy, Edgar pulled up the table cloth and stood ready with his sword.

"H-help me! Lydia!"

At Nico's scream, Lydia made a sigh and stood herself up.

"Edgar, please don't go waving around a weapon in my office."

He let the sword drop to his side and looked over to Lydia with his usual gentle smile on his face.

"Good morning, Lydia. How was your injury from yesterday? Does it still hurt?" They had bickered just yesterday, and she wondered if Edgar had ever felt awkward.

No, most likely not. He is not that kind of man.

"I already investigated the background of the two men who tried to harm you.

Nothing to worry, I've made sure they got a good taste of their medicine."

Huh? What are you thinking?

"Please don't go and go get revenge.I'm not bothered by it anymore."

"Then will you forgive me as well?"

That's a completely different matter, she thought.

When Lydia fell silent, he made a little troubled face and tilted his head.

"Still can't, huh. But you know, I've decided to turn over a new leaf."

He held up the sword in front of himself.

"Lydia, in order to protect you, I must test this."

He turned back over towards Nico again, but the gray-haired fairy cat had already disappeared.

"Damn, he's gone."

As he tutted his tongue, Edgar thought for a bit and turned his focus. His target was Tomkins, whose shoulders flinched.

"Tomkins, didn't you have merrow blood in you?"

"Yes, but even if you say that, that was generations ago, and my lifespan is the same as a human and if I fall into the sea I will drown...."

Even so, Tomkin's portly body, his round, slightly distanced round ryes, and big lips were the characteristics of a male merrow. She had never witnessed it, but he apparently had a fin on his back.

Having those characteristics, he panicked and tried to step back but behind him was a wall.

"M-my lord, will that be your order."

What! if it was an order, you would listen?

"Of course."

"I said stop that, Edgar!"

"Hey, what is all this ruckus about?" came a voice.

The one who said that and entered through the window was a black, wavy-haired young man.

When he was in human form, he had strong and a mystical good-looks, but his

true nature was a ferocious water horse kelpie, and for some reason, he had taken a liking to Lydia and came to London all the way from Scotland and decided to live here.

Edgar turned to Kelpie's direction, like he had found a new prey.

"Kelpie, run!"

"Huh?"

But as he uttered that, Edgar had closed up onto Kelpie.

All of a sudden, Edgar swung the merrow's sword.

It appeared as if the sharp edge had pierced through Kelpie's body who didn't even try to dodge.

"Hey there, Earl, a mere human won't be able to kill me."

'But I felt the blade went through,' sighed Edgar as he gazed at the blade.

"It's impossible for you. If it was a previous Blue Knight Earl, then he might have been able to bring out that sword's real power."

Lydia had cold sweat coming out at witnessing such a sudden event and rushed over to Kelpie's side.

"Are you all right? Are you really not hurt?"

"Not one bit. It was like a breeze blew by."

Kelpie stood up from the windowsill and Lydia pressed her hands against his chest to make sure.

Lydia wouldn't be able to touch a man's body if she had thought of him as a human, but he was a fairy and she saw him more as a horse so she was fine.

Even if she inspected his strong, hard muscular body underneath the shirt, her sense were the same as when she was stroking an elegant horse's velvet fur.

"You're right, it's nothing."

However, Edgar tugged Lydia's shoulder in an irritated manner.

"Please don't touch another man's body right in front me."

"D-don't say it like its improper like that."

"He has the form of a human, so it can only appear improper."

"You're the one who is to blame for trying to go and harm Kelpie in the first place. What if you really did hurt him! It's the merrow's sword, it could have killed Kelpie!" "Are you worried about him that much?"

"O-....of course, he's my friend."

"You become angered at my female friends, and yet you're saying that I should silently consent to your male friends?"

Isn't that a twisted comparison?

"Now listen, Kelpie isn't a male friend but a fairy friend. Even if you were to blindly love a canary, no one would be jealous."

"I don't think so. If a peacock were to open up its feathers to court you, I would shoot it dead."

She wanted to think he was joking, but his ash mauve eyes were serious.

"That's why, this creature is a nuisance."

He glared at Kelpie.

"Hey, Earl, why don't you give it a rest. Don't tie Lydia down with your possessiveness."

"I would like it if you didn't shove your nose into our affairs. I was saying what is completely natural as a fiancé."

How on earth was that natural.

And when she thought that, the irritation surfaced up again that had been following her since yesterday.

He goes and kisses a woman I don't know, then to top it off, he could have been trying to marry the granddaughter of the Grand Duke of Cremona, and yet he's still openly treating Lydia as his fiancée.

He has acted far too impudent that she could allow.

"Kelpie, would you mind leaving us for a moment? There's something I need to discuss to Edgar with."

"Ah? Why."

Because if she were to say something that would deny their engagement in front of Kelpie, then things would become complicated later on.

"You sure are not considerate. You're a nuisance; just a pair of lovers are about to express their love to each other, you're in the way."

That is never going to happen, were the words that was about to pop out of her mouth, but she waited until Kelpie took his leave.

"Edgar, I have to tell you,"

She angrily clenched her fist.

"Wait a moment."

"I will not wait. It is a big mistake if you think that you can make everything run as you please...."

"Tomkins, you're free to go now."

Lydia finally remembered that the butler was still there, and felt completely embarrassed and her body went frozen as she remained clenching her fists.

"Please call me if you need anything," said the butler.

The door closed quietly, but before Lydia could remember what she was going to say, Edgar wrapped his hands around her fists gently.

"Lydia, please understand. I don't want to lend you to anyone."

"You are out of your mind. You're purposefully doing things so that I wouldn't be able to trust you."

"I'll never do that again. I promise, so would you think about our marriage positively?"

"T-that's a completely different matter from this. You know that."

Their hands remained held together, Lydia tried to back away, but Edgar would fill every step.

"This isn't different. If you would feel jealous, then that means we're in love with each other."

"It isn't jealousy. I'm saying that no matter what a liar like you would say, I can't trust you."

"But you're also a liar. You're getting angry because you are starting to fall in love with me, and yet you won't accept those feelings."

He suddenly took the offensive, and that startled Lydia.

She wanted to say that wasn't so, but no words came out of her.

She couldn't meet his eyes so she faced down.

"Please accept it and face me."

She was prepared to complain about Edgar treating her as a fiancée, but instead she was nearly talked wrong into right.

"Then you wouldn't have to be in doubt. I intend to make my resolve,"

continued Edgar.

She couldn't stop her heart from beating rapidly and could even tell that her face was turning bright red.

"Wh-what does that mean? Are you saying that you're still undecided about actually marrying me? So that means that although I have my use, you really need a strong resolve in order to tie yourself down to one woman!"

"No. I love you and I want to make the resolve to protect you from now on."

Why are you saying such a thing with such a serious face?

But Lydia could only think that she needed to hurry and escape from him.

Or else, she had a feeling she might be convinced by Edgar's argument.

She didn't want him to notice her heart's discomposure and closed her ears to his words and went running away from that spot.

Raven carefully took the merrow's sword that had been thrown aside and put it back into its sheath. Feeling his movement in the corner of his view, Edgar opened his mouth as he remained standing in the same spot in the room that Lydia went running out of.

"I'm in trouble, Raven. I can't fight like this."

Because, he couldn't use the sword.

And yet, if Lydia would come to love him and would wish to stay by his side, then he would make his resolve and was going to think of a way to continue to protect her.

Even if he made that resolve, that didn't mean Edgar would be able to see fairies and there was no guarantee that he would be able to face Ulysses equally.

Only, it was because he didn't wanted to face the choice of distancing her.

In the corner of his heart, as he was feeling that the only way to protect Lydia was to distance her away from him, he continued to seduce her like a useless struggle.

"I won't be able to let myself let go of Lydia. I wonder if someone would go take her away from me by force."

"Are you planning on silently watching that if it were to happen?"

No, I couldn't, Edgar thought as he let out a deep sigh.



It was a book illustrated with beautiful pictures about a fairy story.

The painter Paul had let her borrowed saying that although it is an illustration book made towards children, it's a typical fairytale.

Edgar thought it was unbelieveable childish of him to learn about fairies from a picture book.

However, it couldn't be helped since there weren't any books that seriously researched about fairies.

The story of the picture book was a fairytale that anyone would have heard about when they were a child.

The beautiful fairy bride made her husband swear to keep one promise. Something that he must not do, but from some accident, that promise was broken, and the bride vanished, never to appear again.

It was just a small trigger, but Edgar felt that would also take away Lydia from him and he fell depressed and closed the book.

It was his fault for making Lydia's feelings regress one step back, but rather, Edgar felt that it was Lydia's fault instead.

Just because that boy had the power of a fairy doctor, Edgar had to be put through melancholy about not being related to in blood with the Blue Knight Earl.

He had realized that he wasn't able to protect Lydia.

He wanted to beat the living daylights out of that man, who at one glance, appeared fifteen or six with an overbearing attitude.

However, he must also be feeling the same thing towards Edgar.

His only worry was that he wasn't able to anticipate what Ulysses' movements where recently.

It appeared like he wasn't in London. But, it wasn't like he had returned to America.

Edgar felt that he was just keeping quiet somewhere and waiting for the right time.

For when his master 'Prince' would one day come to England.

He didn't have any information as to when that would be and if they intended

to set some sort of trap before that, and so for Edgar, the situation of him not being able to decide and move continued.

That's why, he needed to set his heart pretty soon.

To how far he was going to battle with Prince.

Even if he were to lose everything he had in order to completely involve himself, he didn't know if he had the resolve to bring along Lydia all that way and take responsibility.

He didn't know if Lydia would come along with him all that way.

There was the possibility that the reason he was so fixated on Lydia because he had the naturally indecent attitude that was so deeply soaked into himself like it would be a waste for him to go and distance himself from a woman and there were moments when the thought that it would be easy for him if only Lydia would lose interest in him and go away by herself.

But, when the moment something like that were to even be close to happening, he would rush to go and try to stop her, and even he himself thought that it was incoherent.

He tried to turn his focus away by opening up a letter that he had remained untouched. When he read the letter saying something about fairies, Edgar didn't read all the way to the end and folded it back up.

That was because he knew it was a letter that should be passed on to Lydia.

However, on this day, there was another part of the writing that made him open it up again.

Changeling.

Maybe it was because he was still bothered about what the Cremona Grand Duke had talked about last month.

"....Please forgive me for sending you one letter after another. I was unaware that the Lord Earl had said not to attempt to retrieve your changed child and I became worried if my lord was put through discomfort at my letter asking for help. I had married into this family from another land, hence, I had not learned of the ways of this town, and was only in dismay at having my child stolen away from me. If it was the biddings of my lord earl that all of our town has our trust in, then there must be some meaning behind it that we common people could

not imagine, but to have one's child taken away, as a parent, I feel heartbroken. I cannot understand why I must be put through this...."

Reading up till that part, Edgar was troubled about a certain suspicious part and thought hard.

He had no recollection about saying to leave the changeling alone. He wondered if this town was loyally obeying the words that were spoken by the earl from many hundreds of years ago.

However, it writes like it wasn't the words of the earl from the past but like it was spoken by the current lord of the house.

And, at that same time, he recalled about the Cremona Grand Duke's granddaughter was taken by the works of a changeling as the bride of the Blue Knight Earl.

There could be someone who was claiming as the Blue Knight Earl long before Edgar had become earl.

If that person didn't have the merrow's sword, he wouldn't be acknowledged by the nation as the Earl of Ibrazel, but if it was just to use the name, then it was possible.

He thought it was a need to investigate this.

Just at the moment when Edgar was nearly going to stand up, his butler appeared.

"My lord, you have a visitor."

"Who is it?"

"They would not name themselves."

From behind Tomkins who had on a completely lost look, Raven came into the room and went to Edgar's side and whispered something to him.

Edgar nodded.

"Tomkins, I will have the dirty guests leave immediately, so there is no need for tea. Don't let anyone approach the drawing room."

"Understood."

Even if he thought it suspicious, the butler didn't let that appear on his face and strictly obeyed the instructions he was ordered.

Now, what was left was for Edgar to throw out the uninvited guests.

"Raven, let's go."

Leading him who silently gave a nod, and entering the drawing room, there was a young girl and man waiting for them.

The girl had her coffee-colored hair tied up in one without any intention of looking fancy, looked over to Edgar with her slightly slant eyes and opened her mouth.

"Hey there, Sir John. It's been a long time."

"If you don't mind, call me Edgar. And one more thing, it isn't Sir, it's Lord."

"Ah, is that so. So, your name changed. It seems you've gone quite up the ladder."

The young gal made a smile, and on her cheek there was a cute dimple made. However, with her attitude on taking over the whole sofa and sitting back overbearingly, was far from cute.

Standing next to her with his arms crossed, there was a man who was easy to guess as her bodyguard in one glance. If he could recall, the huge, bear of a man hadn't shaved himself and had a beard on his face should be Pino, who the girl considered him like her younger brother.

Setting himself down to sit on a chair, Edgar looked at both of them one at a time.

"Did you come all the way from America just to see me? Lota, you haven't changed a bit. It looks like Pino has grown quite tall and I could hardly recognize you, you've transformed into quite the man."

The huge young boy, must have been trying to act like he was in a bad mood, as he only replied "Thanks."

Yes, young boy, this tall, huge man should have been still in his teens. If he could remember, he was the same age as Raven.

"Then, what is your business? Such proud pirates like yourselves didn't come to your old acquaintance just to seep some change from him, right?"

Lota made a scowl like she didn't want him to make a fool out of her.

"You can't figure out why we're here?"

"I don't know."

"You remember Betty."

"I never forget about women."

"If I can remember, we first met you just after our old Captain had passed away. Betty, Pino and I, all three of us were raised by the Captain like we were siblings. Although, we aren't related by blood."

"I'm aware. Only you were the daughter of the Captain, and wasn't Betty and Pino children who the Captain had picked off the streets? The two of you would periodically go out to the sea, but Betty wasn't the type of girl who wasn't meant to be a pirate. She had stayed in the harbor town and lived while she was left in the care of a hairdresser woman's house."

"It would have been fine if that was how things remained. But, she met you, and that corrupted Betty's life."

Lota's shoulders slumped down, and instead, Pino opened his mouth to speak. "It was best if she didn't learn about the crest. If she was targeted because she was a princess...."

Edgar remembered the crest that had an eagle and rose carved into it. The golden ring had a red stone, the size of a coin, embedded into it, and by the gifted hands of a craftsman, the crest had been carved into that.

Like there was a fire whipping and twirling inside it, it was a fluorite that gave a mysterious yellowish-mixed glow that appeared to sweep out from the darkness.

Just by chance, Edgar had known what family that crest represented. When he was still living in the ducal house in England, he had heard that the dukedom that had that crest had collapsed and as all the family members of that royal family dispersed as they fled the country.

With one look at the crest, or coat of arms that represented the family, one would be able to know the historical background of their ancestor. Not only your own family, but it was necessary for one to learn the coat of arms of foreign countries. He thought it was at those kind of circumstances when he was told about that family.

Edgar had told to Betty about the grand duke family on the crest to Betty. At that time, Edgar didn't even think that it could have belonged to Berry and just thought that it was a souvenir that the pirate captain had gotten his hands on somewhere.

However, from that day forward, Betty began to go around proclaiming that she was a princess and talked about what had happened in her life.

Hearing that rumor, the one that came was a person proclaiming that he was hired by the Grand Duke who was searching for the whereabouts of his lost family members.

Leaving Lota and Pino, who were like her siblings, Betty should have headed to the Netherlands to where her grandfather should have fled to.

They had imagined that she would be living a happy life just like in the fantasy stories.

If it meant that that wasn't what happened, then it was just like how the Grand Duke of Cremona who he met yesterday at Windsor had been talking about.

The one who took away Betty was someone who was unrelated with the Grand Duke.

Lota must have found that out when the real person who was hired by the Grand Duke had come to investigate the town that Betty was in.

She must have worried for the sake of her friend and came all the way to England.

"It seems like the culprit of the group who lied about being working for the Grand Duke and took away Betty was called Blue Knight Earl. We had come to investigate about that person...."

"And you were surprised to find out that I was that Blue Knight Earl. But, you know, when Betty had departed America, there was no mistake that I was still residing in that harbor town."

"Yeah, about that, John.....uhh, I mean, Edgar, you are quite the shrewd tactician. It's a mystery of what kind of methods you used to become an earl, and if you were able to do something like that, then I thought there was a possibility of you having a hand in the reason why Betty disappeared."

"I know nothing."

"Well, I never expected that you would tell us just because we are old acquaintances. But, you know, it would be troublesome for a man like yourself who became a peer and lives in such a grand estate like this, to be revealed to

be a great thief who was supposed to be executed in America, wouldn't it?" "So you're threatening me?"

"It's bargaining."



Thinking this was idiotic, Edgar stood up.

"I'm quite a busy man, so you should leave while I can still take it as a joke. I don't want to make an old acquaintance garbage floating in the Thames River." "I'm serious. It was you who told Betty that the one who possessed the ring was a princess. And, on top of that, you're the Blue Knight Earl? How could there be such a coincidence!"

There was a knife gripped in Lota's hand.

In the next second, Raven moved.

Expecting him to go for Lota, surprisingly, he charged at Pino, and punched him and knocked him down with his legs. He pinned down the huge man who fell to the floor and twisted his arm so that Pino couldn't move.

Edgar gripped Lota's wrist who had been watching all that happen in shock.

"While Raven was trying to stop you, was your plan to have Pino attack me? How unfortunate."

He took away the knife from Lota.

"Now that I think about it, Lota, the two of us haven't even held hands together."

"Wh-what stupid thing are you talking about...."

"You were always so indifferent."

"That's because you were in a relationship with Betty."

"But I was immediately jilted."

"That's because you bastard tried to make her drink alcohol that had poison in it!"

"That's twisting the truth. Let me explain that in detail, in my bed chamber."

"Lota!" shouted Pino, as he remained pined down by Raven.

"If you dare to do something to Lota, our crew isn't going to remain silent about it!"

"Lord Edgar, I'm afraid there isn't any time to be playing around."

The voice who interrupted them was Ermine.

What? He asked, still gripping onto Lota.

"It seems Miss Carlton has departed to Yorkshire on the first morning ship."

He immediately let go.

"Yorkshire? Why did she go to such a place?"

"It seems she was asked for help in regards to a changeling case from a town called Wallcave."

When Edgar realized that that was the small estate mentioned in the letter earlier, he felt a strange panic.

"Only the butler knew. He claims that he had mentioned it to Lord Edgar before."

"I didn't hear about that. Besides, there is no way that I would allow Lydia to go there by herself."

"It seems Mister Nico is accompanying her."

"Can you count him as one person?"

Its one animal, he strongly thought.

And it was a cat that only had interest in his fur coat, whiskers and necktie or thinking about food.

Lota went running over to Pino and tried to help him up.

Watching that out of the corner of his eye, Edgar thought if there was a connection between the Blue Knight Earl who kidnapped Betty and the Earl who ordered the townspeople to remain silent about the changeling that happened in the small town of Yorkshire.

When Betty disappeared, a wooden doll had arrived to the hands of the Grand Duke just accordingly to the changeling tradition. If there were to be a meaning behind that, then there might be a connection between the Blue Knight Earl who said to the townspeople to leave the changeling alone.

"Tomkins! Do you have documents in regards to the town of Wallcave?"

When he called, his butler came dashing into the room with the papers in his hands.

"Their local products are fluorites? Occasionally, there are rare red and yellow colored stones that are dug up?"

"That's the crested ring of the Grand Duke family....." murmured Lota.

"It seems like that mining vein has dried out presently. More importantly, my lord, I have remembered that I didn't have a good impression when it came to this town. At the time when I had sent out word that my lord would be inheriting as the Earl of Ibrazel, there was no reply from only this town."

Even if they had a lord of the manor, it was a lord who they didn't even see the face of. Especially, in the case of the Ashenbert family, the family would be absent in periods of hundreds of years, and on top of that, the lord of the house must have hardly ever visited his lands.

Even for Edgar, there were still many estates that he hadn't visited yet.

And yet, since almost all of the lands returned a happy, friendly reaction towards Edgar must probably be because they were lands that had many fairy residents, and so the Wallcave town must have been a problematic land from the beginning.

And it was there, that Lydia was heading to.

As the fairy doctor of the Lord of Ibrazel.

What would happen if she were to come in contact with the Blue Knight Earl that kidnapped Betty?

"Tomkins, you said Lydia departed by ship?"

"Yes, since Mister Nico dislikes railroads, she said that if it wasn't that seriously inconvenient, then she would use a ship. Since, well, fairies do loathe iron."

"Which ship did she get on and what time did it depart? Can you verify its route through the ship company?"

Tomkins hurried and left so that he could find that out.

"Where is your ship?"

"At the bay of The Wash. Since the Thames River is managed with a strict entry code."

"Good timing. It's your turn. You are pirates, so you wouldn't be riding on some slow ship, right."

"Huuhh? Don't make fun of us. Even a clipper couldn't catch up to it."

"I doubt it."

"Shut up!"

"Oh, well. We're not going after a clipper. If you want to find out about Betty, I think it's best if we join forces."



It was a ship that bore a flag she never saw before.

An eye on a black field; how creepy. And it was unbelievably fast.

The narrow neck of the thin ship went ripping through the waters, like it was gliding on top of it.

Just when she thought that, in a matter of seconds, it had shoulder-to-shoulder with the ship that Lydia was riding.

She could see the tiny crew members in the distance as they moved about accurately to move the sails so that they wouldn't miss any gust of wind.

"Hey, Nico, it doesn't look like an England ship, does it. It doesn't have a national flag; I wonder where it came from."

"Isn't it a pirate ship?"

"What, surely not."

And, just when she giggled, there was the blast of a gun that ran through the

air.

On the other ship's deck, there was someone who was holding up a riffle.

Like the gunfire was a cue, everyone could see that the other ship came drastically close to their ship and there were screams that erupted from the crowd around Lydia.

The passengers all dashed off to escape, but either way it wasn't like they could get off the ship, and there were some number of people who looked like they were trying to hide themselves, but she thought that was pointless.

There was nothing Lydia could do and so as she remained near the railing of the deck, she looked around for Nico who should have been right there with her.

"Hey, Nico, where did you go?"

Oh, geesh, he's so quite when it comes to escaping.

Suddenly, the ship violently shook, making Lydia crash to the floor.

It was because of the wave that was created by the unknown ship that came right up next to the ship she was on.

However, the crew members on that ship didn't look bothered at all by the waves and were moving about like nothing was wrong.

Ropes with hooks tied on their ends of them were thrown up onto this side, and the ship she was rocked by another wave, making her unable to stand up.

Crawling across the ropes, the crew members came climbing up onto their ship.

The deck turned into chaos, and screams came shrieking out from all corners.

That was because this was a passenger liner that sailed along the coastline. The ship guard's jobs only required them to break-apart the fights between passengers or catch pickpockets, so they couldn't possibly go against pirates who were armed with weapons.

In a matter of no time, the ship staff and passengers were all gathered in one place without making any efforts of resistance, and were surrounded by the pirate men.

Standing on top of the tallest place, it was a young girl who rested the riffle on her should and let her voice be heard.

"Sorry to cause such a commotion. We promise not to harm any of you. We'll leave you alone after our business is done, so if you don't mind, just hold

through with us."

A female pirate. Lydia stood in amazement at learning that one actually existed, and then her eyes met the pirate girl.

Her hair which was tie into one on the top of her head flowed down in one tail down her back. Swaying it along like a horse's tail, she came up to approach Lydia, and stopped to stand in front of her.

Her eyes were a little slanted, but probably because of her nose that pointed up and her one dimple, she gave a friendly impression. Even her height wasn't that different from Lydia.

For some strange reason, Lydia didn't feel afraid of her and so she gazed back at her.

"Your name?"

Why? She thought, but still answered.

"Lydia Carlton...."

"Pino, it's her."

Huh?

But, before she had time to react, she was thrown up over the shoulder of a huge man.

"Wh-what are you doing!"

Even if Lydia resisted with all her power, he didn't bug a bit, and as he had a tight grip on her, he jumped down onto the plank and got onto the other ship.

All the other pirates also left the passenger ship and cut off the rope so that the pirate ship picked up speed to quickly leave that sight.

Lydia, still not knowing what was going on, was set down to sit on a chair situated in one of the rooms on the ship, and when her eyes found a glass window, she saw that the ship that she was just on was so far in the distance it was a tiny little black dot.

The man who had carried Lydia over his shoulder put her down without saying a word and left.

Surprisingly, it was a clean cabin room, and the fancy curtain and tablecloth sort of made it look like a feminine room.

I wonder if this is that girl's room. But, why is she after me?

Is she working for Ulysess?

But rather, although she didn't want to believe it, Lydia felt a familiarity to this theatrical and coercive method.

"Hello, Lydia, did you think you could get away from me?"

The one who opened the door and appeared was, as she might have expected, a young man with prominent blond hair and wore a brimming happy smile on his face.

"Edgar....., what is the meaning of this!"

"It was so horrible of you to silently leave me like that."

"I am just going to do my work as a fairy doctor."

"Let's have a good talk about both of our future one more time."

Why does it have to be like that?

"Did you attack the ship just so that you could say that? If the ship I was on just now made a report at the next port, then you'll be hunted after again as a criminal."

"It's all right, because I already had a talk with that shipping company. We made it as an emergency drill."

So, that mean's, you've bribed them with money?

"What you're doing is senseless!"

"Didn't you know that?"

.....Yes, I knew.

Her strength left her body and her shoulders slumped down.

Edgar knelt down onto the floor on one knee and leaned down to peer down at Lydia.

"You have to understand, Lydia, a young lady going on a trip by herself that is truly senseless."

"It is work, even if I'm young, or a girl, it's natural for me to go by myself."

"If you're saying its work, then I would prefer if you wouldn't ignore your employer's will. This is regarding one of my lands. Don't you think it's strange to go without asking one word of advice?"

It was exactly like he said, so Lydia nodded.

She was upset and frustrated by Edgar, but this was a completely different matter from that.

"And another thing is I have enemies. I would be worried to make you go to a far land by yourself at a time when I'm not able to read their movements. Please, don't do this kind of thing."

When she realized that she caused him trouble, she began to feel guilty.

".....I understand."

She became confused at this relieved smile.

However, even if that argument was correct, it wasn't excusable to abduct Lydia from that ship.

It was a surprise and frightening experience for her to be attacked by pirates. She thought that her shock wouldn't normally be forgotten just by a happy smile, and yet, Lydia had already lost the will to be angry.

"Edgar, was this your fiancée's cat you were talking about?"

The girl from earlier appeared again. She carried a dangling long-haired gray cat by its neck hair.

He was being treated as a cat, so he looked terribly ill-tempered.

"Nico!"

When the girl let go, Nico stood up on his hind-legs and hurried to fix his crooked necktie.

"Oh, yes, Lydia, I'll introduce you to her. This is the captain of this ship, Lota."

"Nice to meet you, Lydia."

The girl held out her hand, and Lydia, who was still at a complete lost as to what to do, ended up shaking hands with a pirate.

'One more thing,' added the girl and called the enormous man who hauled Lydia all the way here.

"This here is Pino. He's like a little brother to me."

"Li-....little brother? Not a father-figure?"

She couldn't help but make that comment, which the man replied with an even more infuriated expression and scowled at Lydia.

"Pino is the same age as Raven."

Being informed by Edgar, Lydia's eyes opened wide. When she was able to get a

glance over at Raven who was standing by the doorway, she couldn't believe it all the more.

Even if they weren't from the same racial background, the size of the huge man's arm was three times bigger than his.

Pino made a more irritated face and twisted his lips.

"Don't put me together with this baby-face. I just look my age."

"Lord Edgar, would you allow me to strike him?"

"Yes."

In the instant he said that, the huge man went crashing down to the floor.

"Wh-what do you think you're doing, you little bastard!"

"Pino, you better not try. You know you're no match for him."

"Raven, you can only try once."

'Yes Sir,' said Raven earnestly, lowering his fists, while Pino tutted his tongue as he quickly got back up on his feet.

Nico was already standing next to Raven, and patted Raven's leg as if to cheer him up.

"Guys like us get underestimated just because of our looks, don't we."

Lydia wasn't able to guess what Raven was thinking by his expression when he was put in the same category as a fairy, who appeared like a cat no-matter-how you looked at him.

Chapter 3 - The hidden changeling

The link between Lota's pirate crew to Edgar, and the granddaughter of the Grand Duke of Cremona who disappeared and the girl named Betty, and the fluorite called Freya that could only be dug up in the town of Wallcave and the existence of the person who was using the name of the Blue Knight Earl. When Lydia was told about everything all at once, it made her confused for a while.

And yet, Lydia was able to understand that it would have been dangerous of her to enter the town alone and that Edgar had planned this seize.

It appeared like this wasn't just some simple bad joke.

Standing on the deck, Lydia gazed out into the black-colored ocean just when it was near sunset and lifted up her head at the sound of a presence of someone approaching her through the side breeze.

"We going to enter a nearby port before it turns dark."

Edgar stopped to stand next to her as she was leaning up against the railing.

"Weren't you going to go to Yorkshire on this ship?"

"Well, I don't want to sleep on the floor at the bottom of a ship. So, we'll spend the night at some inn and I'm planning on us taking the train. I already told Nico that he can catch up to us on Lota's ship. We'll pretend to be passing-by travelers and enter the town."

As Lydia nodded, she felt their shoulders brushing up against each other, and remembered when he said that she should be close to falling in love with him, and started to feel hard to breath again.

On the other hand, he had a gentle smile on his face and was gazing at Lydia calmly.

"When we're like this, it makes me remember."

"......What?"

"The time first we met."

When Lydia remembered, she frowned.

"Now that I recall, I was also abducted by you by a ship."

"Oh, did we?"

You are easy to forget inconvenient memories for you.

"I only remember that we spent a wonderful night on top of the ocean."

"Don't say things so it sounds misleading."

"Don't you feel that that was the start of our destined love?"

"I don't."

"In time, you'll think so."

I definitely won't.

"Oh, yes, I need to tell you that Betty and I are completely over. Even when she is found, don't let her bother you."

Lota let the story slip that the two of them were courting when they were in America.

That news frustrated her, like it was a bother, or like it was wrong to feel bothered about it, and she didn't know what she was suppose to organize those feelings inside her.

Only that she thought she must concentrate on finding the girl as a fairy doctor.

"....If Betty was taken as a changeling, I think it might be difficult because some time has passed."

"Time has passed? Why?"

"She might have become accustomed to the fairy world."

"I see. Though I don't mind if she comes to like the fairy world."

"You're quite cold."

Edgar loved the company of women, but he never fixated on one. Lydia was reinforced with that every day. So she figured that he would eventually consider what was between Lydia and him as 'over' without any hesitation.

Although nothing has even started.

"People are beings that can't separate themselves from the human world."

"Then, I wish you would become serious about marrying me so that you wouldn't have to go to the fairy world with Kelpie."

"I-....., I might not be a human being."

Like it was hard for him to understand, Edgar peered down to look at her.

"What part of you? Is it because you resemble a fairy?"

"A changeling, often times leave behind a fairy baby in its place. When that happens, the fairy baby is put under a spell so that people couldn't tell it apart from a human. But, somewhere on its body, there should be something that's different from a human. In my case, it's because my eyes are a rare color."

"Green eyes aren't something that rare."

Lydia knew that as well. But, it seemed that people were disturbed by Lydia's eyes that looked golden-green clearly by the different reflections of light.

More than it being because of the color, these eyes of hers that could see fairies were essentially different from that of people and were a gift that held the magic from a fairy.

"There are times when I think. The real Lydia in the fairy world might be wishing to return to the human realm."

"But wasn't your mother a fairy doctor? If her daughter went through a changeling, I think she wouldn't abandon her child."

"Yes. My father always says that I'm not a changeling."

"But you're not convinced?"

"Because I can't fit it with the human world."

She did believe what her father said, but there were times when she noticed the part inside her, that connected more with fairies than people.

"Am I not enough?" said Edgar all of a sudden, with a look like he was pressurized.

"Can I not be the one that keeps you tied to the human world?"

"Eh...."

He let his hand softly touch Lydia's forehead where there was a thin scar left. The breeze would blow up her hair, so it must have stood out.

"I'm sorry, for leaving a scar on a lady's face."

"This will heal soon. I would always make scars like this when I was a child.
Beside, this isn't your fault."

"I was the one who took you there."

Lydia felt that lately, Edgar had changed a little. He was beginning to hold himself responsible for what happened to her. Like the responsibility a fiancé would hold.

Even if she felt that it was a different from the kind of light flirting remarks in the past, but it was still difficult for Lydia to believe that that itself was his form of love.

She felt like she was being pulled in like a pair of lovers would, and her body turned stiff in resistance.

But even still, he held her shoulders so much more gently than ever before.

"I want to ask you something."

".....What is it?"

"Hold out your hand."

While she was trying to guess what it was, he slipped on the moonstone ring on her ring finger.

"This guardian fairy moonstone, it's supposed to be a charm against evil, isn't it? The place we're heading to just had a changeling happened. In order to protect you from things that can't be seen to people's eyes, what I can do is much too little. That's why, at the least, I want you to wear this until this case will safely be taken care of."

He kissed her fingertips and made a smile saying now I can rest easy.

Before she realized it, Lydia's hand had become used to his kiss that was like one given to a lady.

Even if she felt used to it, that meant she didn't feel like she wanted to run away or become angered or confused, and up to the part where his lips touched, there was always a lingering feeling like it wasn't her hand anymore.

"You're not getting upset and telling me to take it off. Are you feeling like you starting to fall in love with me just a bit?"

Oh, I forgot.

"Take it off."

She did say it just for sake, but as expected, Edgar only made a happy smile.



Slipping out of the inn in the small harbor town, Edgar walked to a pub alone. This was a country where people would go to different places to drink according to one's social position, but this was the closed pub that was located to the inn, built with the old-fashioned style where the entrance were divided.

Just beyond the small partition, he ordered for a beer as he listened to the bustle and clamor of the working-class.

On this side, the seats were filled up in a sparse manner but still relatively quiet. For a while, he drank by himself, but then Ermine eventually appeared.

"Will it be all right if I join you?"

"Did you come to keep an eye on me?"

"Yes. If you become drunk and start flirting with women and Miss Carlton witnesses you taking one to an inn, then you wouldn't be able to come up with a good lie.

"If it's about what happened just a while ago, then I wasn't lying."

"I will let that one settle as that."

Making a sour smile, Edgar let the beer flow down his throat.

"But, Lydia wouldn't even allow me a light kiss."

"That's because it wouldn't be light."

It means that hearing it by rumor and seeing it yourself is completely different.

"Really, I feel completely disgusted with myself. Lydia said she feel adjusted with the human world. That gave me the feeling like she might leave to the fairy world at this rate because of my fault."

"Then you will be able to hold yourself back?"

"If it was just having a fun conversation, then you couldn't consider it adultery, right?"

"If it's just conversing, then please settle with conversing with me."

"You're all right if I seduce you?"

"As you please."

Because Ermine knew that Edgar would never try and seduce her, she was able to let it fly by as a joke.

"But it's been so long, Ermine, to drink with you. From the past, Raven didn't like spending time at the pubs and would only wait outside."

"He doesn't like how he's still seen as a child."

"He may not look it, but he surprisingly is bothered about his baby-face."

"When he was told by the maids that he looked fifteen, he was feeling quite upset inside."

"If he's starting to be able to show his emotions, then it's progress."

"But his subtle expressions aren't being noticed by anyone."

Edgar laughed.

Their small, mindless conversation brought him a small peaceful piece of mind for a short while for them. Because they couldn't see what was going to happen from now, this kind of time was precious.

"Oh, let it be. At any rate, I think Raven is happy that you had returned."

"I'm not sure about that. He might not feel comfortable about my hair and nails not growing and my body that turns cold as water when I sleep."

"I feel happy. Even if you are a little different from before, I'm able to sit down and talk to you like this again."

Ermine let the tension in her lips go and even appeared like she was a little lost as what to do.

"How does it feel? Do you feel suffocated in remaining in human form?"

"No, I don't feel anything myself. There are times when I even forget some days that I am a selkie. But, when I come near the ocean like this, I feel like I'm being called by the waves."

"I see.I don't intend to chain you down, so when the time comes, let me know."

When the selkie part of herself awakens.

They unusually had one drink after another and fell into a defenseless drunken state of mind. When the barkeeper set down a new glass, he said it was for the fairy.

Did the customers here have a practice where they treated drinks to fairies? It could have been a measure so that they could charge their drunken customers, but if it was for a fairy, then that was interesting.

He didn't care and tossed over a silver shilling.

When glanced over to the glass that the barkeeper set down, the amount of beer slowly disappeared even though no one had a straw drinking out of it.

Fairies were by people's side unbeknownst to them. That fact was revealed to him ever since he met Lydia.

Finishing her drink, Ermine stood up.

"I'll be going now."

"Aren't you going to keep an eye on me till the end?"

"I'm not the only one who is watching you."

Not understanding what she meant, he felt a little dissatisfied at her dry, offhanded attitude.

"Ermine, do you think that it will be all right if I stay with Lydia like this?"

Before he knew it, he grabbed ahold of her hand to stop her from going.

"I treat her with such forcefulness, and yet, when the time comes when she accepts, I'm not sure if I would be able to accept her."

"Didn't you make the resolve to do so?"

"I thought I had the resolve, and yet I'm quick to waver. I have no guarantee that I can protect her, and yet I force her to join my war, and when I imagine something undoable might happen, then I'm afraid I'd might do something that would make her hate me."

"You mean an affair?"

A means that would ruin everything, just like the fairytale he read in the picture book.

"Because I know that is the most hated thing of Lydia."

He didn't know why he was saying something like this.

"Would you be all right if you were hated so deeply that it becomes irredeemable?"

"No. But if Lydia doesn't hate enough, then I wouldn't be able to let go of her."

And then he realized. That he wasn't himself tonight.

However, Edgar looked at Ermine's hand that he was still holding onto and Ermine did not take her eyes off of his face.

"Do you need an affair partner that would make you be hated at much?"

She always was able to read Edgar's intentions exactly.

".....Perhaps."

Feeling Ermine's tense presence through his fingertips, he thought he must laugh it off as a joke.

Although he wasn't sure if this was a joke or not.

Ermine cautiously let out a sigh.

"Did you think that I can refuse."

Edgar finally let go of her hand.

"I was joking. Don't make such a scary face."

"……"

"......Even so, that was awful of me. I must have drunk too much."

"Lord Edgar, you are denigrating yourself too much. Why couldn't the both of you take each other's hands and solve your problems together. We are not in America anymore. We don't have a battle to fight, you should be allowed to walk the path that brings you happiness."

"I wonder if I have the power to make a woman happy. My lovers always end up wearing out in loving me, and Ermine, I have always hurt you."

"If it was Miss Carlton, I think she is someone who would even try to support her loved one's weakness and faults."

".....Yes, if she were to come to love me that is."

"I will be wishing for that to become true."

Feeling Ermine's presence leave the pub through the doors behind his back, Edgar let out a sigh.

"I wonder what I want to do."

While he gazed at the beer that was set out for the fairy keep on decreasing, it went gliding across the top of the table.

"You have quite the cynical character, Earl."

The one who spoke was a gray-colored cat sitting on the table.

He picked up the large glass like he was carrying a package too big for him and drank the beer.

"I see, so you're the other one keeping an eye."

"If you had an affair with her, then it sure to hurt Lydia. Since that lady is deeply in love with you for some time, and Lydia knows that as well, so it wouldn't be accepted as just a mere whim."

"I don't have those kinds of feelings towards Ermine."

"That's a lie. You know that."

Nico wiped off the foam on his whiskers with his front paw.

"If that were to happen, then you are the lowest and worst type of man. You

take advantage of women's feelings and leave them hurt. Even Lydia would be sure not to want to even see your face."

"I won't do that, there is no way I could do it."

"Which one's sake is that for? Lydia? Or Ermine?"

"Both."

"You're full of lies, Earl."

"Nico, you won't go and say anything unnecessary to Lydia, will you."

"I'm hungry for a fried fish."

"All right."

"But, that doesn't mean I can make the promise not to say."

Edgar was irritated at his nerve and thought he should stoke and cuddle him all over, but since he knew that he was the one at fault, and so Edgar was barely able to settle down his urge to vent out his anger.

Since Nico wouldn't even want to let Lydia know about this kind of awful thing.



"Are you a scholar?"

Oh no, this is just a pastime for me."

"I hear you are gathering fairytale stories."

"I was thinking of writing a book about folklore."

Edgar was coming up with one lie after another so smoothly, and he had invited one of the villagers to join them and ride on their carriage and asked to be guided to the only lodging facility that was said to exist in the town of Wallcave.

"I don't think there was any fairytales in this town."

"In any place or town, there is sure to be at least one or two. Although, these kind of things are best known by senior residents or women."

"But what is the reason for you coming to a place like this?"

"It's just a coincidence. I travel unplanned and play it by ear, but I heard that the hills around this area have the most wonderful views, and since I am having my fiancée accompanying me on this trip, then I thought we should go and stop by."

"If it was that, then there are many places and things to enjoy. Since, visitors from the city seem to find a small mountain or cliff to be quite rare."

As Lydia listened to their conversation, she felt like the villager didn't want them to touch on the subject about fairytales.

The view of the landscape was hills standing off in the distance in a row with rises and falls in their rocky surfaces. The vast open nature was enough to please the eyes. However, even if they neared the community, she felt that there was much too little of farmland.

Even the wheat fields that was surrounded by a fence, at this time of season where the harvesting should be over, there should be mountains of straw piled up, but they were only filled with withering weeds.

She was told that the main produce of this town were fluorites, and there originally must be a small number of farmlands, but hearing that even fluorites weren't being able to be dug up, so she wondered what they were doing.

She wondered if the people were living on just the money sent in by those working out of town.

As she was thinking that, they passed by the town community and were beginning to see tall stone buildings that carried a different kind of air then that of a village house. When their carriage stopped in front of that, the villager explained to them that it was the estate of the lord of the manor. And that normally, the people opened it as a lodging facility.

"Is the lord of the manor not living in it?"

"He doesn't come that often. Since, he is an earl who has estates here and there."

"When was the last time he came?"

"Oh, I can't say exactly. Maybe, two years ago."

Hearing that, Edgar gave a glance over towards Lydia.

Just as she thought, someone who claimed to be the Blue Knight Earl had visited this town, Lydia gave a serious nod.

"Please wait for just a moment."

Saying that, the villager disappeared into the back of the building. After some while, two women appeared.

"You must be the Viscount Lord Middlesworth. If you would follow me, I shall guide you immediately."

That was the alias name that Edgar had used to introduce himself to the villager just earlier. The oldest women opened the entrance lock and gave directions to the younger woman.

It seemed that the only lodgers were going to be only them.

"Would you prefer a room that has the view of the ocean, Lady Middlesworth." "Eh."

Suddenly called by that, Lydia was thrown into a panic.

"She is still just my fiancée, so would you make our rooms separate. I think it's best to have a waiting room for a maid attached to it. Although it would be even better if there was the view of the ocean."

Maid? She surprisingly thought and turned her head around and her eyes met with Ermine, who had a face like that was expected.

Hiding the fact that she was a fairy doctor, and even if there was a need to enter the town, she sort of felt like she was being used to Edgar's advantage.

She was even made to wear a dress that a noble daughter would normally wear, and she must have looked like she came to play around with her fiancé and bringing along her maid, but she was put through the feeling like she was being made to go along with Edgar's bad joke.

"Martha, then would you escort the lady," said the older woman, to which the younger woman nodded in reply.

At the name Martha, Lydia remembered something. The woman who had sent the letter about the changeling also was addressed from Martha.

"Lydia, see you later."

Edgar gave her a pleasant smile, and disappeared into a room along with Raven. As Lydia was escorted into another room, she spoke to the woman.

"Umm, are you perhaps married?"

The woman was the quiet type and also gave an impression like she was very depressed, so that made Lydia worried if she might be the mother of the changeling.

"Yes. It has been one year since I married into this town. My husband is working in the next town so he isn't living here with me."

"Do you have children...."

"No."

Then, she might not be the one. But, according to Edgar's story, it seems like the whole town is saying to give up on the changeling to all the village members, so she might just be saying that she doesn't have any children.

Even though she might be doubted or eyed suspiciously, Lydia asked her a question.

"Are there any other husband and wives who had just gotten married?"

"Oh, no, since this is a small town, I am the only one. Is something the matter?"

"Eh? Ahh, umm,"

"My lady can't help herself but want to hear the stories of young newlyweds recently. Since her own marriage is nearing, it seems there are quite a few things she is worried about. But, please, have the only thing you talk about is that you were glad to get married."

Ermine gave her a helping hand, and Lydia thankfully let her heart rest easy.

"I see. But, if it were me, I don't think that I would be of any use to my lady. Since, I'm regretting my marriage."

Regret? Because your child was put through a changeling?

But, to go and say you're in regret, and she should have gotten her child taken away, but that could maybe be because her husband wasn't by her side.

Putting aside Lydia who was in surprise, the young woman guided them through the room in a businesslike manner.

"The room for your attendant will be in the back there. May I ask for you to come and get the live charcoal for your fire later? I'm sorry, there just isn't enough working hands at the moment."

Leaving the nodding Ermine in the corner of her eye, the young woman was quick and crisp in her movements in opening up the curtains and when she was done, she looked like she was going to leave, so Lydia rushed and tried to stop her.

"Uh, I-, I can see fairies!"

The young woman turned around with a suspecting look.

"Do you have anything that is troubling you? I can talk with fairies, so I think I

could be of some help...."

Suddenly, the look of her face changed, and she spoke up.

"If that is true, then I will caution you that its best for you to hurry and leave this town at once. Or else, it would put your lives in danger."

Leaving with just words that sounded like a threat, the young woman sped out of the room.

"What is that suppose to mean?" mumbled Lydia as she was lost.

"The whole town might be threatening her not to leek out the word about the changeling occurring."

"So that they would obey the order given to them by the person who they think is the Blue Knight Earl? Yes, if that's so, then the other villagers might not talk about fairies that easily."

But then, why are the mothers not allowed to retrieve their changeling child, she wondered.

Ermine left the room so that she could go get the coal.

Outside the window, the sound of the wind kept endlessly blowing. Even if she was inside the room, a building with no fire lit was completely chilled and cold, but she didn't feel like getting her coat, and so Lydia remained as she was and sat down on the sofa.

She realized that the window was making unnatural noises, and when she lifted up her face, she saw Nico standing outside and knocking on the window glass.

In the end, the reason why Nico decided to ride the train might have been because he was worried about Lydia and wanted to keep his eye on her. Getting up, she opened the window and he hopped down from the window and came into the room.

"Oi, Lydia, this town sure is quiet. Even if I walk down the streets, there's hardly any people, and I can't even see the sight of any fairies even though this is one of the lands that belong to the Blue Knight Earl."

The reason the number of people were low must have been because nearly all left town to work in the cities, but now that she recalled, it was strange to not see any fairies at all.

She thought that, but Lydia noticed a shadowy dark figure move behind Nico's

fluffy tail like it was trying to hide itself.

"Whose that? Your friend, Nico?"

"Huh?"

Nico turned around and held up his tail and found a small brown-colored fairy there, and placed his paws on his hips and turned his body to face it.

"Who are you, don't go and let yourself touch my tail as you like."

(Huh? Oh sorry..... I just thought you were an unfamiliar cat.)

"I'm not a cat."

(Whaaat)

"Cats don't talk, and you know they don't stand up and walk around."

(Now that you say that, you're right.)

"Are you an idiot?"

It was a female fairy that wore and skirt and cloth as a hat. She looked closed to a brownie, but from the looks of how weak her brain is, she might be more of a dobby.

"Now, Nico, don't say such awful things."

The small fairy turned to face her, and as soon as her eyes met with Lydia's, she went rushing back to hide behind Nico's tail.

"I said stop, this human isn't to be afraid of."

(What, are you able to see me?)

"I can see you. Because I am a fairy doctor."

(A fairy doctor!)

The fairy let out a shrill like she was surprised and rushed over towards Lydia's feet, and in a desperate manner, she clung onto the hem of Lydia's skirt.

(Please help my child!)

"What? What do you mean?"

(My child is being put in a pot. If they left my baby like that, they're going to boil my baby!)

Put a fairy baby into a pot? That was one of the measures a human would take in order to uncover the identity of the baby when they were suspicious of it being a changeling.

There were times when fairy parents would leave behind their own fairy baby

who they put magic on to make it look like a human baby in place of the baby they stole. In those cases, if humans put the fairy baby through something terrible, then it would reveal its true form and the magic would be undone, and it was said that the fairies would give back the baby they stole.

However, Lydia thought that was a method she couldn't recommend.

It didn't guarantee to have your baby returned, and because of that, there were times when the stolen human baby would be treated horribly by the fairies.

Instead, it was a method people who didn't know anything about fairies would take, and if it was a fairy doctor, they wouldn't use such a method.

"Your baby, is it the changeling that was exchanged with one of the villager's baby?"

(That's right, but how horrible is it for them to put my baby in a pot.)

Since fairies don't like iron, they considered it cruelty to put a fairy in a pot in place of a baby cradle. The young woman, Martha, who they met just now, must have heard that method from somewhere and tested it.

However, she was working here and it didn't seem like there was any time to be boiling a pot.

"Then, you better return her baby back to her."

(I can't. Everyone wouldn't allow me.)

The female dobie wiped her tears with Lydia's skirt.

Lydia carefully lifted her up and placed her on top of the table.

(You say everyone, so do you mean your kind? Why won't they let you?"

(If I were to do that, then all of us will be eaten by The Wyrm.)

Wyrm? That was a dragon that had the enormous body like a snake. There were times when they didn't have any legs like a lizard.

It was a different kind of dragon that had wings; those species of dragons were much more common here in England.

"There is a Wyrm here?"

(The Wyrm is the one who creates the Freyas.)

It was said that this place mined up precious fluorites by the name Freya.

The name Freya, which meant fire, might be created from the fire that the Wyrm breathed out.

(Wyrm wants to eat human children. And it orders us to go and steal them. We can't fight back, so we ended up doing changelings... But, I don't want it if my baby is going to be put through pain. Please save my baby, Fairy doctor!)

Which means that the baby of Martha might be at the Wyrm's nest.

"Then, was the human baby already eaten?"

(I don't think yet. That beast slowly turns humans into stones and then eats them.)

However, if it still hasn't happened, it would be difficult to retrieve the baby.

But still, in the past the Blue Knight Earl should have made a trade with the fairies so that jewels could be mined out of this land. At that time, he should have made a trade with the Wyrm in regards to the Freyas.

"Excuse me, Dobie, but wasn't it recently that the Wyrm began to want human children?"

(That's right. The Wyrm had been in hibernation sleep all this time. Ever since it was defeated by the Blue Knight Earl. But now it has awakened.)

"Then, we need to think of a way to put it back to sleep."

(That's impossible. The Wyrm can only be defeated by the Blue Knight Earl. But, it was a new Blue Knight Earl that awoken the Wyrm. Just for the sake of wanting Freyas. Long ago, the Earl has stopped listening to what our wishes are.)

A new earl, there was no mistake that he was the one who was making the villagers endure about the changelings.

"That earl is an imposter."

(An imposter? Then if the real Blue Knight Earl would come, then would he defeat the Wyrm for us?)

Although Lydia let those words spring out of her mouth, she was lost in how she should reply about that.

There was no way that Edgar could possibly defeat an enormous dragon like how the old Blue Knight Earl would have. Which means that she couldn't go around claiming that the real one was here.

(Ahh, but more importantly, Fairy Doctor, please save my baby and rescue it from the pot. If you don't hurry then my baby will be boiled.)

"All right. Take me to there."

Lydia decided to follow after the small swiftly moving fairy.

The lord's manor was located a distance away from the community. Lydia left there and was walking pass scrub brushes.

The dobie stopped in front of the kitchen door of a house that was settled a ways away from the town. Lydia peered inside but couldn't see any signs of a pot.

(Where did my baby go? Just a moment ago, there was a pot right here.)

The female dobie searched around the dirt floor.

(My baby looked so cold and I couldn't bear to see my baby like that, so I filled the pot with potatoes.)

"Hey, Lydia, someone's coming."

At Nico' voice, Lydia quickly hid herself behind one of the pillars.

The person might be Martha's mother-in-law. As the old-aged woman came in through the kitchen door, she was able to see that the woman was carrying a pot filled with potatoes.

In the pot, there was water filled so high that the potatoes were all sunken in it. When Lydia hid and watched, the woman placed it atop the heath fire.

"What, hold on just a moment!"

Lydia went jumping out from behind the pillar shadows.

She pushed aside the woman and plunged both her hands into the pot. She scrabbled around through the potatoes and her hands felt the soft touch of baby clothes and pulled out the baby.

"W-who on earth are you?"

"What do you think you're doing? This baby is completely wet. And on top of that, you were about to put the baby over a fire!"

The woman knit her brows together and her eyes went back and forth between the baby that Lydia was holding and the pot.

"I didn't know. I was only asked by my daughter-in-law to boil the potatoes. But that baby, it doesn't cry at all even though it has sunk down in the water. It really isn't normal at all."

She took her eyes away from the baby and balled up her back and sat down in a

chair.

It was just a little bit smaller than a normal human baby, but this fairy baby had a brown crinkled face. Its ears were also pointed, so the magic to make it look human wasn't exactly high-leveled.

If your own baby's face suddenly turned into this, then any mother would become suspicious that a changeling might have happened.

Even the baby's grandmother was lost at what to do and seemed to be mourning.

The female dobie seemed to be in shock that her own child was going to be put on the fire, and was slumped down on the dirt ground and bellowed in tears. Of course, Lydia was the only one who could see that.

Since she nearly tried to wipe her face with Nico's tail, he swiftly swiped away his tail.

"Um, Madam, you mustn't treat it so terribly just because it is a changeling. Please change it into some clean baby clothes. And don't put it to sleep inside a pot."

The woman lifted her face up with a dubious face again.

"Who are you again?"

"I am a fairy doctor."

"A fairy doctor? Humph, a person who says they can see fairies put themselves all on the fairy's side. They only concentrate on getting the good favor of the fairy."

"That's not true. If fairies do something terrible, we would also teach it a lesson."

"Then, why don't you get our baby..."

She let out nearly out, but shut her mouth again.

Perhaps, it could have been because she was told over and over not to go and retrieve her changeling grandchild.

"Get out."

"But...."

"I'll scream for someone. If you go around in this town saying that you're a fairy doctor who sticks your head into fairy business, then you won't be left in

peace."

"Why is that? Because the lord of the manor said so? But, that lord is an imposter!"

"What do you think you're saying!"

The woman changed her expression immediately and stood up.

"Please don't go around saying that kind of thing in this house. My whole family will be tormented!"

At that time, Lydia noticed the presence of someone standing and blocking the passage through the kitchen door.

It was two men who seemed to be villagers of this town and they stood with their arms crossed.

"So, you're a fairy doctor. I thought it was strange for vacationing travelers to come to this town," said one of them as he glared at Lydia.

"M-my family has nothing to do with her. I don't know what but this girl came into the house on her own."

"I wonder if that's true. Didn't someone invite her here? Anyways, we'll need to have a talk with the head of the town."



Edgar, with Raven along, had come to the third floor of the house of the lord. If this was the room which was used for the lord of the manor, then he thought it would be on this floor.

This should be the place to investigate for clues so they could find out about the person who claimed to be the Blue Knight Earl who appeared here two years ago.

With the merrow's sword in one hand, Edgar investigated one room at a time. He brought it along just in case he needed it since he was going to a town that didn't accept him as the Blue Knight Earl.

In recent times, there weren't any nobles who carried swords with them unless they were in the military, but he was required to keep it with him at all times, so it couldn't be helped.

There were a number of rooms that were locked, but it wasn't any trouble in getting them opened.

Edgar sneaked into a room that looked like a gentleman's room, and stood in the middle to take a good look around the room.

In the darkness made by the curtains drawn closed, the thing that glowed and stood out in the corner of the room was a statue made out of fluorite.

Edgar walked over towards it. When Raven lit a fire on the candlestick, the light helped make the shape of the red and purple statue be seen clearly.

"A white swan about to fly up into the sky, huh, Raven, don't you think it's a wonderful piece of art."

Raven didn't agree or deny him, but Edgar didn't want a reply from his in the first place. When Edgar stepped away from the statue, he searched atop of a desk.

There was letter paper and a seal that had the earl family coat of arms in them.

Opening up every drawer, he checked everything inside. However, they were mostly empty.

Raven opened up a cabinet that was locked shut, but no matter how you think about it, it was strange because there was nothing in them.

They must have disposed or hidden the documents, which they didn't want anyone to see, were supposed to be here.

Edgar walked over to the hearth. It had been cleaned but in the pile of ashes in the corner, he found a piece of a burnt up a leather string that would be used to bind something, and he tutted with his tongue.

However, in a minute his eyes fell down to something on the carpet on the floor.

Because he saw some yellowish piece of paper peeking out from one of its corners.

He turned over the carpet and picked up the paper that had apparently been tucked under it.

"Lord Edgar, that is,"

"It looks to be a part of an account."

While his eyes followed along with the words written on it, Edgar eventually drew a frown across his brows.

It listed the percentage of output of the account.

There was a massive amount of jewels dug up that was reported to not be able to be mined.

"Lord Edgar, someone is coming."

Just then, the sound of several footsteps coming running up the stairs could be caught by Edgar's ears.

The people who became suspicious of the vacationers must have come to investigate the lord of the manor's estate.

Raven went over by the door and tried to put the lock on, but Edgar told him that was unnecessary.

"There is no reason for us to run or hide. Let's hear what the people here have to say about themselves."

Edgar set himself down in the chair that must have been for the lord of the manor.

At the same time, the door slammed open and a number of men came stumbling into the room.

Raven went near Edgar who remained sitting down and stood ready with the knife that was on his waist in his hand.

Lydia was told by an old man who said he was the mayor of the town to follow him and had returned to the lord of the manor's estate.

She was led to go up the stairs of the building, while she remained surrounded by the men of the village with an air about them like this was a stately procession.

She was worried if her revealing that she was a fairy doctor without asking if it was a good idea to Edgar might cause him trouble, but there was nothing she could do about it now.

One from their group had gone to check up on the room which Edgar was lodging in, came back and whispered something into the mayor's ear.

The mayor nodded and he motioned for Lydia to follow and they went further up the stairs.

They stopped in front of one of the doors, and they stood to listen up against the door to see what was going on inside the room, but eventually, they looked at each other and nodded, and then slammed open the door and went barging inside.

"Gentlemen, it would be polite of you if knocked and then entered if you had business."

The sound of Edgar's nonchalant voice was even able to reach Lydia's ears.

"What are you doing in this kind of place."

"What you say, is there something that is the matter?"

"Of course there is, this is the room of our lord!"

"Well, you all just wait."

The mayor entered into the room as he called out to the group of young lively men in a tone like he was giving them fatherly advice. Lydia's back was pushed by a man behind her and so she entered the room.

When her eyes met Edgar, there was a second where it looked like he and Raven went stiff, but the both of them quietly watched the mayor carefully allow her to take a seat in a chair.

The mayor immediately left Lydia's side, however before he opened his mouth, he stood in front of the doorway as if to not allow them to escape.

"The young lady who was accompanying you had claimed that she was a fairy doctor, and had apparently lodged one of the villager's infants into a pot."

"What, no! I was trying to save that baby. If you ill-treat a changeling, the human baby won't return. You have to take the right measures..."

"What you're saying is ridiculous, saying that a changeling exists. That house's bride was just making a commotion because her infant that was just born had a little ugly face."

That was the same thing that Lydia was arguing about at the mayor's house.

"Why are all of you going so far like that to hide about changelings?" Ignoring Lydia, the mayor faced Edgar.

"Viscount Middlesworth, was your name I recall. It seems that there are thieves who try to steal precious house items by using an alias of a noble and staying the night at a grand house in the countryside, it seems. It would be strange of you to be searching around in the rooms that were locked while this young lady was making a commotion in the town. I would like if you would leave this place before we throw you to the police."

"Unfortunately, the thieves here would you all of you. Since, it would be troublesome if the police got involved."

Edgar wore a light smile on his face as he stood up.

This was the Edgar that was the most dangerous Lydia knew. He was thinking about how to completely knock out his opponents.

"What? I don't know what you're talking about."

"This house is my estate, everything here belongs to me. Whether I take it out or break it, it's my freedom."

He purposefully swept a near-by expensive-looking vase to the side with his arm.

At the disturbing sound of glass breaking, one of the young men, pulled out a knife in reflex and in the next second was knocked down by Raven, and ended up flying back into the wall.

"Raven, make sure to go easy on them."

"Understood."

Now, then, said Edgar as he gave a look around at the group who went frozen.

"Do you know who I am?"

He took and held up the thing that was resting on the desk. It was a long sword that was still in its sheath.

It was the merrow's sword, and while Lydia watched patiently, he pulled out the sword.

So that the men could have a good look at the large star sapphire, he held it in front of the mayor who didn't make a sound.

"The master of you all, I am the Earl of Ibrazel."

All the villagers were in complete silence.

They probably didn't have a chance to see the sword that proved the identity of the Blue Knight Earl, but they must be aware of the star sapphire that was called the merrow's star.

Even the deep blue that had a faint silk glow and the cross star that shined out clear and bright wasn't just any normal jewel.

All of them clearly weren't hiding the look of surprise on their faces.

However, the mayor took deep breaths as if to calm himself.

".....I have met the lord of this estate a number of times, and so I know him. You are not him."

Edgar shrugged his shoulders like he found it humorous and was trying to say oh, my, my.

"And it would have been for the best of you all if you had just gone with the story that you were all deceived by him. So this makes all of you his accomplices. It couldn't be helped if society considered that you took his hand and were tricking me."

He stood dangling the sword and started to slowly walk in front of the villagers.

"In regards to 'my' fluorites that are mined in this land, you had reported to the earl family butler that the mining vein was draining, when in reality, the amount that was being dug up had drastically increased compared from the past. Oh, goodness, really, which one of us is the thief."

When he came all the way up next to the desk, he held out a piece of paper that was colored in a yellowish hue.

"So, mister major, you're dividing the money that was earned by the fluorites that you illegally channeled to yourself with the rest of the members of this village? Which means a hidden market route exists. Since, the fluorites here have a unique coloring that is only mined here in England. You weren't able to lie about where the place they were dug up and distribute them. And so, why not I have you all talk about the thief who claimed to be the Blue Knight Earl and is

the leader of your group and stole my fluorites after he plotted everything with all of you and made all of the negotiations for you all."

"The mining vein of the fluorites has depleted," said the mayor stubbornly.

"Just like you say, we cannot take the liberty and sell them as we please. That is just only a memo, and not any kind of official paperwork. Even if you search the whole village, no fluorites or mountains of money will come out. All of us here are just barely able to get back with a modest living."

I see, said Edgar with a smile like he found something fun. The perfect smile that his perfect looks wore carried a heartless presence behind it.

Even Lydia could tell that he had lost his temper to quite a level.

"So, even if things were made public, you're still going to act like you have nothing to hide. If you intend to go against the lord of your manor, then you must be quite prepared for this."

"Our lord is not you."

"You have angered me. I will have you all sent to the fires of hell," stated Edgar in a cold tone like a tyrant in the past.

Chapter 4 - My true feelings?

With the negotiations still broken down, the mayor and villagers left.

Edgar remained in the estate of the lord of the manor, and gathered Raven, Ermine and Lydia in one room to speak to them.

"So, now what we should do."

"Edgar, you blustered out such a bluff without thinking up anything?"

Lydia was imagining that he might have had some kind of card up his sleeve that would reveal how the villagers were embezzling the fluorites.

"You wouldn't be able to make a bluff, if you kept on trying to think up of something. We only have four people on our side, and if they gathered up all the men in the village they would have a few dozen, so it wouldn't even be a match for us."

"They should be hiding the actual fluorites, so our only option is to uncover those," said Ermine.

"But, it's not like we can go and search all the houses, and most of all, isn't it a problem that all of the village people are feeling hostile towards us?" asked Lydia.

"That's true. I don't think that they planning on going all the way to killing us to shroud this in darkness, but if we used force to try and uncover the secrets about the fake lord, then our safety might be put in danger."

But, there was no way that Edgar was intending on backing down at this point. For some reason, he seemed to have the trait of not being able to tolerate having something that belonged to him taken away from him.

Whether it was an object, or rights or a person, and even if he didn't know that it existed until after it was stolen from him, but he wouldn't give any mercy to those who treaded onto his lands.

Since, he did say something like he was going to get even with the young men who picked on Lydia at the party a while ago.

When she thought it like that, Lydia began to think that he considered her

something of a procession to him.

Just then, there was the sound of a knock.

All of the villagers had left the estate of the lord and it should have been completely empty here. So if there was no maid in the house, then it was much too inconvenient for nobles to reside here.

The mayor must be thinking that by doing that, Edgar and his group would quickly leave the town, but if that were so, then all four of them in the room wondered who it could possibly be.

"Um, I have brought some tea."

It was Martha who came in, pushing a wagon.

As if nothing had happened, she began setting out baked sweets and scones and sandwiches onto the table.

"I'm terribly sorry, so the Cook won't be able to come tonight. We will not be able to provide any dinner for you, so would you be able to bear with snacks that come with tea."

"That wouldn't be a problem for us."

Edgar made a little suspicious look as he watched her hands that were pouring them tea.

Raven swiftly stepped over to Martha and made her set down the teapot.

"Please take back everything."

"......Why is that?"

"We will not take in anything that is offered here."

When Raven said that strongly, Lydia finally learned what it was Edgar and the two were being cautious of.

He only had his two servants that he could rely on, and yet, the reason why Edgar turned all of the village members to his enemies wasn't something haphazard where he made a bluff because he lost his temper. The three of them had fought together all this time and are doing so even now.

They were putting the up most caution in the movements of their opponents and were thinking of a way for them not to lose.

"If you need to taste it for poison, then I wouldn't mind to be the one to do it. This here all is safe. The mayor and the rest of the village are for now just want all of you to leave here and are not wishing for this to go into something Serious."

"Um, Edgar, I think it would be all right to trust her. She is Martha Tyler, the woman who wrote you the letter about the changeling."

Making a look of surprise, Edgar looked at Lydia and then at the woman.

"Is that true?"

With a grave expression, she nodded.

"I am terribly sorry for what is happening, Lord Earl. I didn't know that there was a different, real earl. That's why I had written something that was so criticizing."

"You believe that I'm the real one?"

"If you weren't, then why on earth would you come to such a remote village such as this to investigate. I had the opportunity to visit the next town and heard from the landlord from there about how he had met the Earl Ashenbert in the London ton, and he was kind enough to tell him your London address. If it was someone whose name is known throughout London, then however one would think about it, I believed that you were the true Earl Ashenbert."

"However, is it all right for you to go against the mayor and go and take care of us like this?"

"Even if I were to obey the mayor, there isn't going to be one good thing in my benefit."

Lydia picked up one of the teacups.

"That's definitely true. I'll have some tea. I'm so hungry."

And she took one of the sweets and popped it into her mouth.

"Ah, this biscuit is delicious."

"I baked them."

Like the tense left her shoulders, it was apparent that Martha let her cheeks relax. The gruff impression that she was giving all this time must have been because she was filled with nervousness by being in a town where there was no one who would take her side.

Letting out a sigh like he was astonished, Edgar sat down next to Lydia.

"I can't let my precious fiancée be the one to taste it for poison. Mrs. Tyler,

some tea for me as well."

He was quick to take the sandwich that Lydia was reaching out to take in her hand and plopped it into his mouth.

"By the way, isn't there a relation to how the villagers are embezzling the jewels, and how they are letting the changelings happen?"

In place of Martha who tilted her head like she didn't know, Lydia answered.

"There is a relation. But at this point right now, there's nothing we can do."

She couldn't reveal to Martha that the Wyrm, who created the Freyas, liked to eat human children, so she was only able to give a vague explanation.

"The fairy mother who had to exchange her own child with Martha's baby was also troubled. But, I will take care of this."

I wonder if I could do anything.

The dobie had said that only the Blue Knight Earl was the one who could defeat the Wyrm, but if Edgar wasn't able to do that, then Lydia had to do something about it.

Even if she couldn't defeat the Wyrm, there should be a way that she could bring back the changelings. It wasn't the cure for the root of the problem, but for now, that was the only thing.

Even still, the earl imposter who wanted to awake the Wyrm wasn't just a normal jewelry thief no matter how one thought about it.

But when she thought about if there was such a person who had that sort of power, then Lydia could think of only one person.

Ulysess.

Edgar could also be having a small feeling that Ulysess and Prince might be involved in this.

It seemed like they had originally keeping a hostile eye out for the Blue Knight Earl long before when the unexpectedly occurrence of Edgar inheriting the name of the Blue Knight Earl for them.

If that were so, then Edgar must want to know the real objective of Ulysess who was pretending to be the landlord.

As the sun set, the wind began to blow harder. The estate of the lord which peered over the ocean should have been getting directly hit by the blasting

winds, however it seemed to have a strong structure and so, the glass windows slightly rattled and none of the candle lights wavered.

However, when the windows that were connected to a balcony made unnatural sounds not made by the wind, Raven would react.

As she watched him step over towards it, he swiftly opened the window.

"Woah" Hold on there just a moment!"

The one who let out a shrill just before Raven was about to jump him to attack was a large pirate man.

It was Pino, Lota's supposed younger brother. In the next moment, the hostility from Raven was gone.

"See Lota, that's why I was against going in through here."

"Well, it can't be helped since no matter how many times we ring the doorbell, no one comes and answers it. And the only room with a light was this one."

Along with her voice, Lota hopped over the balcony railing.

"Hello there, Lota and Pino, you two couldn't have come at a more perfect time."

Edgar made a smile as he welcomed the two of them in.

Lydia became cautious as that face of his was when he had come up with some scheme.

That was because Lydia thought quite a number of Edgar's schemes was anything but a brilliant idea.

"I didn't spot even one of the villagers, it really is a strange town."

"To tell you the truth, Lota, it's already been revealed by them that I am the Earl Ashenbert and that I had come to this town to investigate it."

"Huhh? Then, what are you going to do. Did you find out anything about Betty?"

"Nothing yet. So, I have an idea I want to offer you, please lend me your Cook."

"Cook? Wait, Edgar, this isn't the time for something like that!"

"Lydia, meals are very important. To do anything."

And then, he turned around towards Martha.

"Mrs. Tyler, how much food and alcohol is there?"

"I think that there was plenty in the storage shed, but I will go look."

Please, and as he said that, he looked back at Lota and gave her a smile.

"Tonight we'll have a feast. Bring all your crew from your ship."

".....Well, it's great that you will treat us to drinks, but what are you wanting from us?"

Obviously, Lota knew Edgar very well, so she had a very careful stance.

"Let's play a war game."

"Ehhh! What are you saying."

The only one who let out a yelling voice was Lydia, and all the rest of the people didn't it take it as a joke of his and was watching Edgar solemnly.

"To sum it up, this village has been taken over by the fake Blue Knight Earl who stole my rights. We will attack and recover it. The mayor here is connected with the one who calls himself the Blue Knight Earl. He should know about what happened to Betty. We'll have him spill out everything he knows."

From the moment he revealed his name, there was no mistake that Edgar was planning on using the fighting power of Lota's crew.

And Lota, who came in order to rescue Betty didn't hesitate at all.

"Yeah, I'll do it."

"Then it's decided. Let's make a plan."

The barrels of wine and beer in the storage were all carried out into the hall and there was a lively party going on.

The merry sound of the ocarina that Lota was playing had a bit of sadness mixed in its cheerfulness, and Lydia listened in amazement to the foreign music.

That melody reached the small quiet room that was located a ways away from the grand hall and mingled with the sound of the wind and waves without seeming out of place at all.

Lydia was alone and stood silently by the window and gazed up at the moon.

The sound of voices talking came from below the window outside.

When she peered down, she saw Edgar and Ermine.

Ermine and a number of the pirate crew should have gone out to spy on the mayor and villagers' houses and kept watch on their movements.

It seemed like the mayor and villagers rushed to hide the evidence that they embezzled the fluorites, but by giving them time and letting them act freely, it seemed like Edgar was getting the idea of where all the important items where.

After he retrieved all the information, he was going to launch the attack and planned to be certain that he takes over the village.

Edgar looked like he was listening to some kind of report from Ermine. She could hear certain fragments of their conversation, but once the talk finished, he murmured something.

"I was not myself earlier."

"I have already forgotten about it."

Being told from her that she forgot it so completely, Edgar made a look like he was dissatisfied.

"Having Lota and Pino appear, it makes me feel like time has gone back to when we were in America."

"I would prefer not to recall on that past."

"But, in the middle of all those hardships, we did a lot of partying and fool around like tonight."

"While that was going on, we were able to forget about everything."

It was an Edgar and Ermine that Lydia didn't know.

It wasn't a master and servant, but two comrades in an equal standing. Or maybe someone even closer than that.

Edgar was looking back straight into her eyes, but he didn't dare place his hand on her like he would with Lydia.

That distance between them seemed like it hid a high, noble feeling, and that made Lydia feel the thumping of her heart.

"I didn't want to make you die."

"Lord Edgar, everything was my fault."

"I was in the belief that it was the best method for the both of us."

"That is exactly right. And yet, I had done wrong."

As Lydia felt their state unusual, she held her breath and stayed still.

From there, their conversation came to an end and the two of them went their different ways, but Lydia remained standing in her spot as she felt like she had come across into a special scene of events.

It was a conversation that she couldn't understand the meaning of. It was just a

simple talk of their past. And yet, there was a dull something that brought a stinging pain to Lydia's heart more shaper than the kiss scene of the two of them.

She had never known an Edgar who looked in so much pain and longing like that.

She couldn't understand it herself and kept taking deep breaths.

"Miss Carlton, did you have a light with you?"

Lydia was suddenly called for and she was unnaturally surprised and hurried to turn around.

It was Raven who stood in the doorway, waiting for Lydia's reply in a completely indifferent attitude to Lydia's disturbance.

It seemed like he had just passed by and noticed that Lydia was in a room that was lit by the light of the hearth and decided to ask her.

"I-it's all right. I can see the moon much more clearly in the darkness. See, the light is reflecting onto the waves and that helps make the outside brighter."



Raven approached her and looked out the window, and with his usual emotionless tone, said 'Yes, you are right.'

But still, he didn't take his eyes off from the scenery outside so he must have sensed something.

"Uh, you don't seem to be break out and enjoy yourself. Do you not like alcohol?"

By talking to Raven, Lydia tried to push out the feelings in her that she wasn't able to understand.

"No matter how much I drink, I cannot get drunk. That's why I don't particularly have the desire to drink."

"I see.Oh, yes, if I think about it, there really isn't anybody who wants to drink tea so much they can drown."

When Lydia made a smile, he stared at her like he was always looking at something unusual. At first, she didn't have any particular business and just smiled at him, and he would look at her like this.

As he was someone who grew up treated as a tool to kill people, it must have appeared strange and peculiar for Lydia to smile at him or talk to him like she would act to a normal person.

Before, she didn't know what he was thinking and became tense and nervous just by being near Raven, but lately, Lydia was put at ease at his serious personality.

Unlike Edgar who was a liar and who was hard to understand what his true intentions were, even if she couldn't read his expression, it was because he was honest, actually much too honest.

"Now that I remember, Raven, you should also know about Betty, right. What sort of girl was she?"

Raven snapped his eyes away from her like he jumped in reaction and only said 'I do not know' and tried to leave the room.

His guard has gotten tougher.

If it was before, he would have replied, as there was no mistake that he was strictly taught by Edgar not to reveal anything about his women.

Lydia grabbed onto his coat to stop him.

"Wait listen, it isn't anything like that. In order for him to ask about her to the fairies, I don't know any of her characteristics at all."

"I think he really doesn't know. The only female characteristic he could have remembered was that she was wearing a skirt. Was what I heard from Edgar before."

It was Lota.

As Raven silently bowed to the female captain of the pirates, it seemed like he was not pleased about that assessment and so opened his mouth to correct her.

"No, when it comes to Lord Edgar's lovers, it wasn't that I was unable to remember them, it was just the women kept changing so fast I hardly was given any time to remember each one."

Lota laughed. Raven didn't understand why it made her laugh, and as she was slapping his shoulder he looked dubious.

"You haven't changed. More importantly, your master was calling for you downstairs."

Hearing that, in exchange with Raven who rushed to leave, Lota walked over to the window sill where Lydia was.

"Sorry for the men making such a commotion."

"Oh, no, I don't mind it being lively."

"You know, I had been thinking that you didn't know anything about Edgar as you were with him, but I see that's wrong. You know what happened to him in the past. No wonder you didn't act so surprised when you came across pirates." I did feel surprised, thought Lydia.

But, when she was by Edgar's side, she learned that things one would think couldn't possibly happen do in fact happen."

"In regards to Edgar, it isn't like I know all that much about him."

"But, you're engaged to him."

"It isn't a real engagement. There happens to be some circumstances, and besides, I don't have any intention of marrying him."

Hmmm, replied Lota, with a look like she was long ago realized that.

"I was having the feeling like the two of you didn't have the air of engagement

with you. Regardless with him, you seemed to be keeping more distance."

"He's like that with any kind of woman."

Making a short chuckle, Lota stared over at Lydia.

"With me, I had been watching how Betty fell in love with him and was hurt, so I know it's none of my business, but I was a little concerned about you."

Lydia wondered if she meant that if Lydia were to fall in love with Edgar, then she would end up being hurt.

"Betty was hurt?"

"She wasn't the type of girl to be wounded by one or two broken loves, but with him, it seemed like she was hurt in various meanings. Not long after they jilted, she suddenly said that she was going to leave America and go to where the Grand Duke was. The three of us grew up together and it didn't matter what our background was, but it was just when we had a talk that we weren't going to separate from each other."

".....Why did they jilt? Edgar doesn't seem like the type to end it from his part, , so it was his cheating that was the reason after all?"

"After all, so, you are being cheated?"

"Eh, no, it isn't like that...."

She rushed to wave her hands. Lota went silent to think about something for a while, but looked like she made her mind and opened her mouth.

"You know, Edgar wouldn't with the girl that he truly loves even once.Don't you think so?"

She must mean Ermine.

Lydia remembered how the two of them were just a few moments ago, and strangely convinced that that was so.

Edgar felt that by not accepting Ermine's feelings, it would be the best option for the both of them. He was saying something like that.

Ermine had said that she was the female slave of Prince. That's why he was keeping himself distanced away from Ermine because he was worried that he would make Ermine remember about Prince.

Even to Edgar, to make a deep relationship with Ermine must have made him feel a fear like he wouldn't be able to get away from Prince.

But then, does that mean he's not sure if that was the right decision he made now?

Because, by making himself keep refusing Ermine, it made her lose her life as a human.

".....If he really loves her, then he should have just and gone and expressed his feelings to her even now."

"That would be impossible. I'm not exactly sure why, but when you see those two, you get the feeling that there is no other way."

Lydia wondered if Prince's influence between the two of them was much bigger than she had imagined.

"And so Betty decided to separate from Edgar?"

"No, she became even more determined to steal him away, and tried to make Ermine drink a poisoned wine."

Huh?

Lydia had the feeling she heard something unbelievable, as she stood with her mouth hanging open facing Lota.

"Well, she said that it was an amount that wouldn't kill someone if they were to drink it. But it turns out that Edgar noticed it, and said to Betty that she should drink it. To make your lover drink poison, what a lowly scum of a man! she apparently said and ended her relationship with him. Well, I think they both are at fault, to tell you the truth, but at least he was treating Betty as his lover at that time. But it isn't the method you would use to deal with your lover's jealousy, right. In the end, doesn't that mean that Betty finally found out the true character of him, didn't she?"

It looked like Betty was a girl who was the unimaginable type to Lydia.

What on earth was Edgar's type of woman, no, his love for women knew no boundaries, was what she was made to end up thinking.

But, if she wasn't the one who he felt the most love for, then it could just mean that no matter who he grew feelings for, they all ended up as the same to him.

If it was a girl who could just stay by his side for some reason or other and would distract him from his loneliness, then anyone would be fine....

Yes, that was it. That's why I must not believe in his lies.

"If you were in love with him, then I shouldn't be saying something like this to you, but if that's not the case, then I can't just watch as you fall to his prey. If the two of you are courting while you are only looking at the surface of him, then he would treat you kindly and I'm sure it would a lots of fun. But, as soon as you wish to be his number one, then he suddenly rejects you, so frankly speaking, he's a woman's worst enemy."

Since it was the first time for Lydia to hear a woman say about Edgar like that, as she was still carrying her feelings that was nearly making her depressed, she in turn thought it was funny.

Yes, she thought, it was just like she said.

"But with you, don't you think that you are a good friend to Edgar?"

"Who knows. But, at least I thought that he was an impressive man beside that flirtatious part of him. He took control over the rotten rats of the lower part of the city and how he went head-to-head against the grown-ups of the underground society."

"Lota, don't say anything that would make my impression unfavorable."

Edgar appeared himself.

"But I'm complimenting you."

"Before that, didn't you say something like I'm a woman's worst enemy?"

"It's true."

"Lydia, so this was where you were. I was looking for you."

He must have sawn that he was at an disadvantage and so pushing Lota aside, Edgar walked over to Lydia.

His smile wasn't any different from his usual one, but when Lydia remembered his hidden expression that he showed Ermine just earlier, then Lydia suddenly felt suffocating.

"......What do you want?"

It isn't me. The one he truly loves.

That's why as he calls her his fiancée, he would go and kiss another woman.

She should have known that, but she had now clearly grasped the pent-up feelings in herself which didn't have any shape till just now.

"I was just thinking about departing, and so I came to see your face. Lota, you

also need to go and give out orders."

It was an obviously motive to try and drive Lota out, but although she shrugged her shoulders, she went out of the room.

When it became just the two of them in a semi-dark room, before Lydia could even try to escape, Edgar swiftly took her hand.

"Since when were you here?"

She had the feeling that for an instant, it looked like he was concerned about the window.

"Just a moment ago."

Lydia lied.

At her reply, it was unclear if Edgar doubted her, as one of his brows twitched.

However, immediately he lowered his gaze and looked down at the moonstone on her ring finger and narrowed his eyes at the hazy milky-white glow.

"When you have that on, I have a feeling like the light in it grows. When you look at it like this, it makes it seem like you being the bearer of this ring and marrying me was decided from the very beginning."

That is impossible.

And Lydia tried to swing away his hand, but he wouldn't let go.

"More than that, is it really all right to go striking against the mayor and villagers?"

"Are you being worried for me? It's all right, they might have the larger number, but our side is much more experienced in launching attacks."

....Attacks, aren't something that people normally should be used to.

"The ones I'm worried about are the villagers."

"We'll go easy on them."

Saying that, he stepped closer to Lydia.

Before she knew it, his hand was resting on her back and they were so close to each other, it was like they were completely lovers.

"Um, Edgar.....?"

This is bad.

"Uh, Edgar, I've figured out something, with you I uh....., I just want to be friends."

Edgar, who must have listened to this abruptly, tilted his head to the side a little.

"Did Lota say something to you?"

"It isn't like that.... Anyways, please don't go around saying I'm your fiancée."

"Do you mean that there isn't even a little bit of chance for you to fall in love with me?"

"Well....yes."

And for her to say that was because the way Edgar asked that question was unusually pessimistic and she felt like he was anticipating Lydia's reply.

"All right."

Huh? All right?

What do you mean? Thought Lydia as she knitted her brows, to which he made a sad smile.

"If you feelings doesn't change by the time we need to return to London, then I'll give up."

"Re-really?"

"You don't believe me."

"That's because some of your promises were never kept."

".....I'm serious."

His words that he said as he let out a sigh seemed like he was in pain, but most likely that wasn't like he was in pain because he was going to give up Lydia.

For Edgar to say something like he was going to give up on Lydia and that wasn't like him, could probably be because he himself was starting to feel that there was a lie in the words he used to flirt with Lydia.

If he thought that Lydia could have heard the conversation that went on just earlier below the window, then Edgar wouldn't be able to help but remember how his feelings were at that time.

"But, for now at least would you wish for my victory as my fiancée. Isn't it customary for a lover to see off her lover with a kiss before he goes out to battle?"

This part of him, this was the part she couldn't tell was fooling around or being serious.

But, hearing about a battle, it made Lydia nervous.

If the other side made a serious counterattack, then there was a chance for people getting injured, and even the possibility of something happening that wouldn't just leave them with injuries.

Oh, no, what do I do.

A kiss is alright if it's just on the cheek, right. Stories with knights were usually written like that.

She was trying to remember that as she was still unsure.

She wouldn't like it if something were to happen to Edgar if she didn't do this, but this kind of charm was just some superstition.

But.....

"It's all right. I won't greed for too much," said Edgar, who must have become sorry for Lydia who became stiff because she was seriously thinking it over, and smiled.

"It's best you get some rest about now."

"You're going now, right?"

"It will be over by the time you wake up."

I couldn't possibly fall asleep through that.

However, the only thing Lydia could do was wait.

Even if she stuck her head in the middle of a fight between humans that was unrelated to fairies, she would only get in the way.

The only thing she could do was wish for his safety and wait for him.

"Then, I'll be going."

".....Be careful."

As Edgar nodded, he didn't let go of Lydia's hand that easily.

When he boldly walked away, Lydia felt like her body was tense, like she didn't want to separate from him.

Even if she fell in love with him, she would only get hurt.



In the grassy weeds and thickets where the clan of dobies lived, Nico sipped the thick mushroom alcohol as he was taking part in their banquet.

(So then, Mister Nico, did the fairy doctor come in regards to the changeling.)

(Although I think it's useless. Even if it was a fairy doctor, there is nothing the doctor could do against a Wyrm that was revived by the Blue Knight Earl.)

"That Blue Knight Earl, what kind of man is he?"

Nico licked off the trickle that was clinging on to his whisker.

(I don't know.)

(I was able to get a quick glance. When he was brought the Wyrm's bride.)

"Bride?"

(That's right. The Blue Knight Earl not only awoken the Wyrm but also gave it a bride.)

"That would be a human, young girl wasn't it."

(Of course. Dragons from the old days prefer young women, and like it more if they are a noble princess.)

So the granddaughter of the Grand Duke of Cremona who was said to disappear wasn't made into the bride of the fake Blue Knight Earl but was made to be the bride of the Wyrm.

Well, that sure is misfortunate, thought Nico. But if it was a girl who that Earl lost interest in, then there's the possibility that the Wyrm, who wouldn't cheat at all, must appear like a better male to her eyes......or possibly not.

"So, what kind of man was the Blue Knight Earl?"

(He was wearing black clothes.)

".....That's all you know."

(Like I said, I only got one quick glance. But, if it was the Wyrm's bride, then she might know.)

"But the bride is near the Wyrm, isn't she. How am I supposed to ask her."

(She comes out of its caves sometimes. Since she wants to eat human food. She seemed like such a poor little thing, so we sometimes bring her food sometimes.)

"So, that would be the time when we could meet her."

(Yes, that's right, we'll be taking food to her just around daybreak. Since it's the day of the spring tide. It's when the Wyrm's power weakens. And so, the princess is able to get near the border of the cave.)

When Nico heard that, he rushed to stand up.

"Daydreak. Wait. I'll bring the fairy doctor."

Lydia was going to stay awake and wait, but as she passed the time on the sofa she had apparently fallen asleep.

It was still dark, but when the tip of a furry tail swatted the tip of her nose, she sneezed and rubbed her eyes.

".....Nico? Oh, no, was I asleep?"

"More importantly, Lydia, I found out the location of the princess!"

"Princess.....?"

"Betty, was what I think her name was? The princess who was said to be kidnapped by the Blue Knight Earl. It seems like she was made into the bride of the Wyrm."

Lydia stood up like a spring.

"Is-is that true?"

"It seems like once a month, there's a day when she comes out of the Wyrm's cave. If we don't hurry, we're not going to make it."

"All right, I'll go immediately. Ohh, but, hold on a moment, I need to go to my room and get my coat."

Morning outside could get quite frosty. Even if Lydia was in a room with a hearth, it was quite chilly for her as she was sleeping.

"I'll be waiting in the hall."

She rushed up the stairs and ran into her bed chamber. As Lydia swung open the closet, she thought that the dress she was in would be hard to move around.

It was a dress to make her appear when one was on an elegant vacation trip, but Edgar's true character was revealed so quickly, and when she thought about it hard, there was no necessity to be finely dressed.

A place like the Wyrm's cave was sure to make any dress become dirty in a matter of time.

When Lydia decided to change out of her current dress, she pulled out her normal wear from her trunk and pulled off the fluttering, soft dress.

Once she got off the crinoline, she stepped into a skirt over her one petticoat.

When she tried to button the top of the dress, there was a sound by the

window.

"Nico, would you wait just a few more...."

She thought that Nico was urging her faster. However, at the end of Lydia's view when she turned around, she saw that kelpie grinning back at her.

"Hey, Lydia. You disappeared suddenly so I was looking for you."

"Wait, Kelpie! Don't come in without asking, I'm changing!"

"It's not like I'm interfering you getting changed."

"Don't you have any common sense?"

"Common sense?"

He was a horse, on top of that a fairy, so there was no way he would.

Instead of explaining, Lydia decided it was best for her to get quickly changed.

Since to Kelpie, there wasn't any difference in undergarments and clothing.

"I can sense the smell of smoke. Something's burning somewhere," murmured Kelpie.

At Kelpie's words, Lydia rushed over to the window as she buttoned up her dress.

But it was too dark and she couldn't see a thing.

At that same time, she heard the blast of gunfire.

Ohh, no. I wonder if Edgar and everybody are all right.

But, there wasn't any time to wait for their return.

I need to let someone know that I'm going to go search for Betty.

Lydia attempted to leave the room.

"Hey, is going outside as you're changing a part of human's common sense?"

Ohh, geesh. At times like this, being a woman is so bothersome. Not being allowed to go outside dressed improperly.

On top of that, women's clothing tended to come with a number of buttons more than one could bear.

As Lydia was in a hurry, she called for Kelpie.

"Would you help button up my back."

"Huhh?"

Lydia was in a rush in buttoning her sleeve.

"Hurry, please give me a hand."

In a somewhat tiresome manner, Kelpie came up to her.

"What is this, what am I suppose to do?"

"Put them through the holes.

"That's just too tiresome...."

"Lydia, are you here?"

Just then, the door to her room swung open.

Lota was the one who appeared.

She took a good look at the unfamiliar man who was in Lydia's bed chamber and who was also helping her get dressed, and made an ohhh-like sound.

"Sorry. I'll come later."

Did she just get the completely wrong impression?

"Wa-wait Lota! You're wrong."

"I know, I know, I won't say this to anyone."

"That's not it, he isn't human, but a horse! I beg you, please don't go!"

With a look like she didn't understand what on earth she was saying, Lota still stopped.

"Something so tedious I can't do. Hey you, why don't you help her."

"Me?"

"I'm sorry, Lota, please."

"Uhh....., well, okay. Umm, oh, yes, it looks like Edgar and his group were able to close in on the mayor's house. Our scouts were able to confirm that the villagers were splitting up and doing something to hide something, so me and my crew went ahead and seized them, but it seems like the mayor is putting up a fight. I'm going to go and back them up," said Lota, as she buttoned Lydia up.

"That gunfire just now....."

Lydia wondered if it was part of the commotion of the attack.

"That small thing isn't something to worry about."

Right now, she just had to believe so.

"Oh, yes, Lota, I think I might be able to meet with Betty. If I miss this opportunity, then I'm told I would have to wait another month, so I'm going to go immediately."

"Betty? Are you really able to meet her?"

"But, it looks like she was made into the bride of a dragon Wyrm. That's why, it might be difficult to get her out right away."

"The bride of a Wyrm?"

"She's being locked up in the cave of a dragon in the fairy realm."

Being told something like a fairytale so suddenly, Lota turned and twisted her head for a while. However, she didn't react by laughing at what Lydia said, and eventually nodded like she understood.

"Then, I would like to go with you. It will be fine if things here will be left up to Pino. Please, Lydia, take me with you."

"Yes...., that might be better. That way it would be faster to see if she is Betty or not."

Lota winked with one eye, like she meant it's decided, and she poked her head out of the window and called for Pino.

She turned around and again gave a glance towards Kelpie, then spoke to Lydia.

"Lydia, you really pick your men by looks, don't you."

"No, you're mistaken!"

Lydia continued explaining that Kelpie was a fairy, but it was unclear if she really got the message, and so Lydia, along with Lota and Nico had made it all the way to the cliff along the edge of the ocean coast.

The group of dobies had apparently told Nico to come here.

Beneath the sky that was beginning to brighten up, even though they didn't have a lamp, they were able to get a clear view of the landscape around them.

"What, the cave of a Wyrm? You really shouldn't, Lydia, go to a dangerous place like that."

Even Kelpie had tagged along with them.

"Creatures like them breathe fire, you know. I'm not kidding."

"You don't have to force yourself to come along."

"If I don't come with you, you'll be found by the Wyrm and eaten. It isn't just some simple fairy, you're going against an enormous dragon."

"Kelpie, even if you were with us, no one could go against the Wyrm."

"Don't worry, if it's about speed, then I won't lose. Besides, it just has a large body, other than that it moves slow and dull."

So, that's mean you're going to run.

"Hey, Lydia, there's a boat over there."

Lota pointed down at the bottom of the cliff near the edge of the waves.

In a land like this that is settled right next to the ocean on a cliff, the only way to go out to sea was to go down the wooden stairs that was built into the cliff wall.

At the bottom of the stairs that the villagers had built, there was a small boat that was tied to the shore.

"They said that you can enter the cave of the Wyrm by go through a crack in the cliff out by the sea. Doesn't it mean that we should use that boat there?" said Nico and went ahead to go down the stairs.

Lota watched as Nico stood up on his two hind legs and went skillfully down the stairs with a curious look and followed after.

And once Lydia also reached the bottom, there was a small piece of lumber that was floating near the small boat. When she squinted to take a good look, it was a raft that a male dobie was riding on.

(Are you the fairy doctor?"

"That's right. Are you going to be the one to guide us?"

(If it was this small boat, only two humans can get on. The fairy cat, well, I guess would be all right.)

Said the guide dobie after he looked at Lota and Kelpie, who were behind Lydia. "I'll swim."

As soon as he said that, Kelpie jumped into the sea.

There was a big splash of water, and once he transformed into a black horse, even Lota opened her eyes in surprise.

(Could you put on this luggage. Fairy doctor, are you good at steering a boat?)

"Huh? Uhh...., I'm going to be the one to steer?"

"I'll do it. I'm pretty good at it," offered Lota.

That allowed Lydia to breath out and relax.

(Well, then, would you please follow after me.)

In the grass-woven basket that the dobie set in the small boat that Lydia and the two were riding, there were mushrooms and tree fruits. It must be the food that was going to be delivered to Betty. The dobie's raft kept moving along the cliff. The swirling waves that crashed against the rocks made the small boat the Lydia and others were riding sway violently, but the oars that Lota was steering made the prow of the boat follow right behind the way dobie led them.

Eventually, when a long vertical cleavage appeared in the rocky cliff, the dobie steered his raft towards that crack.

It was a narrow crack that the small boat that Lydia and the others were riding could barely slip through, and Lota was able to craftily pass through it.

The rocks on both sides of them gave a pressuring sense of oppression, but when they kept going for a while, the sight of a wide limestone cave came out into their sight.

"Whoa...."

Along with Lota, the both of them awed.

From an opening that was diagonally right above, the morning light that was finally starting to come up shown through, and the white ceiling and walls appeared like they let out a faint glow.

The limestone that were hanging down like icicles looked like chandeliers, also, the naturally white pillars made the place look like it was a sanctuary.

"This is the nest of the Wyrm?"

(The nest is much further in the back. Oh, and one more thing, if you're on the ocean waters, it's still the human world, but once you step on the land here, then you're in the Wyrm's territory. So, make sure not to get off from the boat.) Just then, the boat suddenly rocked.

Lydia grabbed onto the boat, and Nico went tumbling and hit his head.

(Oh, this is bad,) muttered the dobie.

"What's happening, mister dobie?"

(Usually around this time, the Wyrm should be sleeping, but-)

"Wait, then, that's means...."

(It looks like we've been found. We better hurry and escape.)

As soon as he said that, he turned his body and rapidly started to oar towards the exit.

Lota tutted because the small boat they were on couldn't be turned around

that easily like the raft. And while that was going on, they were slammed with a strong vibration made by something enormous moving, and crumbling rocks starting to fall down on them from above.

"Hey, Lydia, come over here!"

Kelpie rose to stand up on the water surface in his horse form.

He reached out his head and sank his teeth into Lydia's coat and pulled her out of the boat to carry her onto his back.

At that same time, he bolted into a gallop through the large waves.

"Kelpie! Wait, Nico and Lota...."

However, Kelpie had only Lydia in his mind in the first place.

Still grabbing ahold onto his neck, Lydia saw a large wave was about to crash into the small boat, but once Kelpie galloped into the narrow hole in the cave, she couldn't see the boat and the two left behind anymore.

Chapter 5 - Blue Knight Earl's fluorite

For example in the past, in the times when the lord of the land possessed all the rights in regards to his land and the residents living on it, he wouldn't have hesitated to use force in order to suppress a rebellion.

The lord of the land was in the beginning the King of a small country and had an army of his own.

Now that things have come to this pass, in this England where internal civil wars have long ceased, he wondered how many nobles were maintaining a private army. Either way, Edgar didn't possess something convenient like that.

However, be it luck or not, Edgar knew of a more powerful way to fight than the nobles in the past.

He was taught chivalry, but he was also acquainted with the methods that were not fair at all.

The point was you just had to win.

Inside his cloak, he had the merrow's sword strapped to his waist and it made him seem like a noble from the Middle Ages, but what he carried over his shoulder was a pirate's rifle gun. Those didn't fit with his perfectly-coordinated clothes, from his top hat to the tip of his shoes, which looked like he was just coming back from a night ball.

Good lord, this was an absurd outfit. No one could ever tell who he was.

And yet, for the time being, he wasn't the gang leader like the past, but considered to be fighting as a noble.

Using the strength of pirates, he made them practically attack the villagers' house who were feeling hostile towards him while they were asleep, and didn't spare them a moment to fight back and subdued them, and was just about to surround the last remaining ten or so men who were all barricaded themselves in the mayor's residence.

In the end, within the villagers, it was only a portion of them who were taking part in the benefit of joining forces with the fake lord and taking the fluorites.

The villagers who weren't so, had been building up distrust towards the mayor and others and there were some that even informers who provided Edgar with information, and so he was able to subdue his opponent's rebellion efficiently.

Already, at the stage of scouting, he knew the names of those who would put up a fight to the end.

However, the mayor and others who were barricading themselves in the building, weren't showing any signs of surrendering.

It wasn't going to be difficult to barge in, but there was a possibility that they would chose to counterattack in desperation.

Edgar was still looking at the conditions from outside the building because the group apparently brought the gunpowder that they used to dig out the fluorites.

The sky was just barely beginning to brighten up.

In no time, the day is going to break.

"Lord Edgar, we've found the fluorites that were dug into the wasted farm grounds. It turns out to be quite the amount."

Raven came up to him and whispered into his ear.

"So, I guess they could work as evidence. And the freyas?"

"They weren't in with them. However, according to a report by a villager, just recently, it was witnessed that one the size of a closed fist had been extracted. Apparently, it has been hundreds of years for something like that, and the whole village was ecstatic."

That precious freya could be hidden by the mayor. Or perhaps already in the hands of the fake lord.

"To hell that the mining vein has depleted. I'll make them learn just exactly what happens when you steal something from me."

Edgar judged that the pirates were starting to be bored, and decided to begin giving out his threats.

Leading the pirates, he approached the building that belonged to the mayor.

He stopped just right before it.

"Can you hear me? I've had the fluorites returned to me. Although it's an amount that's much too less for the past few years. I hear the amount that

you've sold off had been stored as golden coins under your floorboards? There's no more use in trying to hide them. Why don't you surrender and come out?"

Of course, there was no reply.

"Well, it's fine. Since it seems to be a waste of time if we continue to hold out, so I'll be taking my leave. Oh, yes, I'll have it known that your bad deeds were found out and you all committed a group suicide, or you had a falling out and killed each other."

He thought he could see a vague commotion arise among the shadows beyond the window glass that had the curtains drawn.

Edgar beckoned the pirates with his hand who were holding flaming torches.

"Go ahead and throw those in."

"Is that all right?"

"It's already day break. They shouldn't be needing lights anymore."

That wasn't the problem, was what the man wanted to say, and from his hand, Raven took away the torch.

"Fluorites are said to release a beautiful light compared to a flame. Don't you want to see what color the fluorites that are only able to be found here throughout the whole world glows?"

He narrowed his eyes and made a grin, and that must have made him appear like he was willing to seriously burn down a house and people just so that he would be able to make sure to see the glow of the fluorites.

Even as Edgar was speaking, Raven emotionlessly was about to throw in one of the torches.

Just then, from the front door a number of villagers came tumbling out.

"Wa-wait just a moment, we'll surrender!"

"We were all just doing what the mayor told us. We didn't know that that lord was an imposter..."

"I was getting a portion of the profit, but I was told that if we're caught we'll be convicts and so our only option was to resist till the end, and so I barricaded in here...."

"But,Earl, I don't want to die! Please spare me...."

"And the mayor?" asked Edgar, cool and steady.

"He went off and escaped by himself. It looks like there was a secret passageway, and before we knew it, he disappeared."

Hearing that, all the pirates went dashing into the building.

Shattering the glass and breaking down the door, there were angry voices that ran out to drag out the mayor.

Edgar watched as a number of them seemed to find something like gunpowder and came carrying that outside quickly, and entered into the mayor's house.

The remaining men who didn't have any signs of strength left to fight had apparently gathered into one spot by the pirates.

"Hey, Sir John,I mean, uh-"

"Edgar."

Edgar turned around towards Pino. Like it was tiresome for him, the large-framed young man knitted his brows.

"What are you going to do with them?"

"I'll listen to what they have to say at the estate."

"There's no sign of the mayor after all."

"I'll have that secret passageway found."

What was suspicious was the underground basement. To Edgar, who was about to go down the stairs that was built in the back of the kitchen, Pino spoke again.

"Oh, yeah, Lota had taken out your fiancées somewhere."

Edgar stopped in his tracks.

"Lydia was? Where?"

"I don't know, they were saying that they found some clues about Betty."

"Just the two of them?"

"Although I wanted to go with them, Lota told me to keep watch of here," he said, in a sulking way.

He had a bear-like large body with a hairy face, but the part of him that was relying on Lota was like a young boy.

"You haven't changed."

Pino twitched his brow like he was bothered at being treated like a fool.

"Even then, you were always tagging right behind Lota. You and your men's

captain, I hear wanted to make you his heir, wasn't he? I even heard how he was talking that how you were in such a blind belief and trust about Lota was your weakness."

That must have made the blood rush to his head, as Pino reached out his arm to try and grab the scruff of Edgar's shirt, but he only ended up having it twisted up by Raven.

Stepping his body back, he tutted as he was even more annoyed.

"......You can see how Lota is much more fitted to be the captain. She may be a female, but she has more guts than any man, and wouldn't lose to a fight. Everyone also trusts her."

"Even if that were so, I think that the captain didn't plan to make Lota the new captain. Well, as long as she is being relied on by you, it just means even she won't be able to live how she wants."

"How she wants? Don't say like Lota thinking that she doesn't want to be a pirate. You don't know anything."

"Even if I'm an outsider, I can tell that you're still not an adult. Even about Betty...., well, who cares, it's hardly necessary to say it now."

To Edgar who was about to go down the stairs again, Pino opened his mouth like he was throwing his anger at him.

"Ohh, yes, there was also an unfamiliar man who was with Lydia."

Seeing Edgar who didn't think and stopped, he made a grin.

"So he isn't one of your comrades? At least, he seems quite close with Lydia. Since he didn't hesitate and went straight into Lydia's room."

As Edgar turned around, he was tightening his hand into a fist.

"Did he perhaps, have black wavy hair and a tall frame?"

"Yes, that. He was quite the pretty face that wouldn't lose to you."

"That isn't even near a rival for me."

"Hmm, oh, really. Well, there are more than plenty of women, so even if you had Lydia taken away, it would be easy to just go looking again for someone to pretend to be your lover, I guess."

He couldn't understand why he didn't crush his clenched fist into Pino's face.

No, that isn't true, Lydia isn't like that. I that moment he felt that objection in

himself, then he realized he wasn't in any position to argue to Pino in regards to Betty.

Though, Betty and he were two who were so alike.

With Lydia, he was serious than he ever was before.

She was precious and he was thinking that he wanted to marry her....

"Lord Edgar, it's a hidden door."

Ermine's voice, at that time, was like a lifeline to Edgar.

He took his eyes away from Pino and hurried to the depths of the underground basement.



"Kelpie, you have to turn back! I must return to rescue Lota and Nico!"

Still clinging onto Kelpie's mane, Lydia protested to him, but he didn't turn back at all.

"We'll be found by the Wyrm."

Just around the time when the rumbling vibrations that shuddered throughout the cave had finally settled down, Kelpie, who was running in no particular destination had stopped and stood, but at this point they couldn't figure out where it was they were.

"Now look, we're lost our way."

Getting down from Kelpie's back, Lydia squinted her eyes to inspect the dark surroundings.

They had gotten out from the ocean tides. Which means they entered the Wyrm's territory.

Perhaps because it was the fairy realm, even though there weren't any artificial lights and even though it was inside a cave, she was able to see her surroundings dimly.

"Everything's fine, if I go in the direction where I sense water, we'll get out into the sea."

Kelpie, who turned into his young man form pointed and said this way.

Hold on, said Lydia and stopped her pace.

"If we go in the direction opposite of the sea, then does that mean we're in the Wyrm's nest?"

- "You're not planning on going all the way to the nest entrance, are you."
- "Because changelings are sure to be there. Betty as well. I have to help them."
- "What are you going to do about Lota and Nico."
- "Even Lota came all this way just to see Betty. She's sure to think the same."
- When she started to walk off, Kelpie walked and stopped right in her path to stop her.
- "You can't go near the Wyrm. It's too dangerous."
- "I'm not asking you to come along."
- "You never came across that before, that's why you're taking it easy."
- Suddenly, there was a rumble in the ground.
- Kelpie grabbed Lydia and hid themselves behind a depression in the ground. Just then, something enormous and long, covered in black scales passed right in front of them.
- ".....What, what was that?"
- "Must be the tail of the Wyrm."
- "Tail? You're saying that was just the tail?"
- "That's why I'm saying the Wyrm is huge."
- "More importantly, it's obviously gone by now. Would you let go of me."
- In the tight depression, Lydia wasn't able to move around at all since her body was packed up against Kelpie who had her in his arms like he was carrying her.
- "Yeah."
- ".....Hey, where do you think you're touching!"
- "Huh? I'm just trying to get you on your feet."
- "Don't touch my breasts!"
- "Why is that not allowed? You don't complain when it's any other place."
- Lydia stood up as she was still picked up in his arms, and just as she turned around she punched into Kelpie's nose and was finally released.
- "It's common sense of humans!"
- "Common sense? That's impossible. When I'm swimming around the lake in London at midnight, every one of the humans in the bushes here and there are always doing....., hey, wait!"
- Oh, don't start talking about such lewd things, meant Lydia as she grew

embarrassed and hurried to start walking off.

"Lydia, that isn't the way. Are you still intending on going to the Wyrm's nest? Even if you go charging in, you know that you won't be any match."

"If it was just getting back the changeling, then there is a way without having to go against the Wyrm."

If it was negotiating with a fairy and getting back the baby, then it would be simple. However, those kinds of cases were rare. Even fairies wouldn't let whatever thing they got their hands on go that easily.

The only remaining option was to snap the wild rose that was in the fairy's nesting ground and break the magic that was binding the human baby to the fairy.

Special roses were the source of what was keeping the fairy's nesting grounds intact. If someone breaks it, then that would make the magic that was filled there ineffective.

"Hey, Kelpie, where would the Wyrm's rose be?"

"You, are you planning on ripping apart the rose?"

"But that's the only option I have."

"All of the magic that has been stored up will charge to the one who snaps the rose. Someone like you, who has no bond to the human world really escape from that?"

She didn't know. But, more than that, there was something that Lydia should be concern about.

If she were to snap the rose, then all that existed in this realm will have their true nature revealed. The ones who were put under the spell of magic will be turned back to normal.

The human baby should be returned to the hands of its mother and the magic that was making the dobie's baby look like a human will be undone and it should be returned to the hands of the dobies.

And that would be the same, if Lydia was also a changeling.

If she originally was the child of a fairy, then the magic casted on her to make her look like a human would break.

She would forget that she was human, and that she had been raised as Lydia

Carlton, and that name and all the things that happened until now.

"And furthermore, the wild rose that's in the fairy's nest, you say it so simply but it really is something important. It's natural for the Wyrm to be protecting it carefully. That itself is reckless. Hey, Lydia, are you listening?"

"......Kelpie, how do I appear to your eyes? A fairy that was made into a changeling? Or a regular human?"

Lydia asked him in a serious tone, but Kelpie only replied carelessly.

"Huhh? I don't know. Who cares, it doesn't really matter."

"It does matter. If I was a changeling, then when I break the rose, I'll forget about absolutely everything."

"You don't have to worry about something like that. Even if you do forget about the whole human world, then I'll look after you. No matter what kind of fairy you turn out to be, you are you after all, even if your outsides change a little, that's nothing to get disappointed about."

That's not what I meant.

"Wait, you aren't being worried that you won't be able to marry that earl, are you?"

"Wh-what, of course not! I just, I'm just worried about father."

"Since you're going to forget, then it wouldn't be a bother to you."

So, that's how its going to be.

When she thought about it, to Lydia, it might not be that much of a tormenting experience.

Although her father would be saddened, from the time she decided to become a fairy doctor, he should have prepared himself for whatever he didn't know might happen. He would surely accept Lydia's decision.

And Edgar......

There were a lot of girls who he had a little interest in all around him. Even Ermine is by his side, so he was sure to forget about Lydia in no time.

And Lydia was going to forget about him, so it wasn't going to be painful.

But if she did remember, was she going to feel painful?

Kelpie's large hand cupped Lydia's head like a cradle to stroke her.

"Don't make such a face. I think to find the wild rose is a much greater feat then

to try and defeat the Wyrm. That's why it's better to leave. If your opponent was a Wyrm, then it's natural that there's nothing a fairy doctor could do. There is no necessity in fixating on helping humans and going all the way as to put yourself at risk."

But, she didn't want to give up without doing anything.

"If I were to forget, would you tell me what kind of human I was? Whatever you know will be fine."

"So, you are going."

Mumbled Kelpie like he was sourly amazed, and murmured "I'll tell you" and patted Lydia's head violently.

"Hey, would you mind not dallying around right there."

Suddenly, there was another voice.

Kelpie kept his hand grabbed onto Lydia's head, and like he was taking caution, pulled her towards him.

The one to peer over towards them from the shadows of the cave's bolder was a young girl who seemed around the same age as Lydia.

"That's the walking path of the dragon. If there's something in the way, then I'm the one who gets yelled at."

"Oh...., I'm sorry. We lost our way."

The girl inspected all over Lydia and Kelpie with doubtful eyes.

"Geesh, why do fairies all have to be so good at transforming into humans so well. I wish you all wouldn't do something so misleading."

"But, I'm a human."

For the time being, that was what she believed right now.

"There is no way a human could come to a place like this. Even I have finally learned that. At first I was thrilled to meet people over and over and expected that I could be saved, but every single one of them were just passing-by fairies. Are you going to leave already."

"Wait, hey, are you, perhaps Betty?"

Lydia pushed Kelpie aside and walked over towards the girl's direction.

"Why do you know my name?"

The same coffee colored hair as Lota. She was a girl with large eyes with a

mischievous little charm about her.

She had been courting Edgar, but Lydia tried to erase that mixed feeling that bubbled up to her consciousness and took a deep breath.



"Umm, I'm Lydia. I came with Lota to come and rescue you."

"Lota? You're lying, Lota would never come here."

"It's true. You are her dear friend, and she was very worried about you."

"We're not friends. Because I betrayed Lota."

Spitting that out, she lowered her head like she was in shame.

She wondered what had happened between the two of them. Lota hadn't mentioned anything that seemed related to that.

Lydia was about to open her mouth to ask about that situation, but like she was sealing away that chance, Betty spoke strongly.

"Anyways, would you go and leave. If you say you're human, then you'll be killed if the dragon finds you."

"But, even Lota is somewhere in this limestone cave. We got separated."

The girl snapped her head up like she became worried.

"Oh, no, what are you going to do if the dragon finds her. Hurry up and find her and take her out of here!"

"Then, you need to help me. Don't you know a lot about the Wyrm's nest?" And then, Lydia took the girl's hand.

"And one more thing, when we leave here, you're coming with us."

Kelpie poked Lydia's back like he was trying to tell her to quit it, but Lydia made a smile to Betty like she had the confidence like she was able to rescue her.



The passageway that was in the mayor's house was connected to a small underground room that was made like it was dug out of a rocky wall.

Edgar and the others entered it with torches in their hand and their eyes were captured at the sight of a reddish-purple glow that reflected the light of the fire and filled the whole space around them.

There were numerous big and small relief sculptures and pieces of art that were made of fluorites.

There were some in the lord's house, but every one had the characteristic of elegance and vigorous dynamics in its beautiful curved lines. It must be the style that is passed down from master to apprentice in the workshop of this village.

Fluorites are not expensive jewels, but this village had flourished by the limited rate of flow must have been because they could put added value onto them as pieces of art.

However, he heard that that tradition had come to an end around the beginning of this century when the amount of extractable fluorites had sharply decreased.

Edgar walked over to one of the reliefs and squinted to inspect the sign in its corner.

"Scarlett Moon?"

He thought it would be a sign, but that was what it said.

Scarlett Moon was the secret organization that made an alliance with Edgar to fight with Prince.

The Blue Knight Earl who appeared three-hundred years ago, Julius Ashenbert's lover and illegitimate child was involved in a decorative art family guild and had founded the organization. However, when their descendants were murdered by Prince who feared the return of the Blue Knight Earl, the remaining artists pledged revenge and banded together to form an organization called the 'Scarlett Moon.'

"Scarlett Moon" meant Flendolyn in Gale. That was the first Earl of Ibrazel, the Blue Knight Earl's child's name who had fairy flowing in the child's veins.

Julius Ashenbert's illegitimate child also had the middle name of Flendolyn and he heard that that child's descendants were also the same.

In other words, the "Scarlett Moon" indicated the collateral bloodline of descendants who were connected to the illegitimate child of the Blue Knight Earl.

"So there were descendants of the Blue Knight Earl who inhabited this village as craftsmen."

"There is another seal of the Scarlett Moon on this one. The years they were made are mostly the beginning of this century," said Ermine who had been inspecting them one by one. Edgar thought hard.

"So that means around that time, the descendants of the Ashenbert family were here."

"Lord Edgar, please look at this."

The object Raven picked up was a letter box that was decorated with fluorites. It seemed like it was the work by the same person, but since it had scratches and black stains unlike the other ones must mean that it was a personal item.

There was a letter left inside it. It seemed like a letter that was sent in praise of his works.

For a moment, Edgar's eyes stopped on a signature. It was signed 'Cremona.' It was the Grand Duke of the dukedom Cremona.

The letter from the grand duke was about praising the works, and there was no where in the writing that particularly stood out, but Edgar knew about the fluorite that had the Cremona dukedom's seal in it.

It was a rare freya that only could be dug here.

The seal-engraved ring that Betty had might have been one of the works of this craftsman.

He shared the blood of the Blue Knight Earl. On the other hand, the princess of Cremona was kidnapped by the man who called himself as the Blue Knight Earl.

He wondered if this case was started because of this craftsman and the freya seal ring.

So that he could verify the craftsman's name, Edgar inspected the letter's addressee.

"Ulysses Barrow...."

Ulysses?

"He was the savior of this village."

The mayor appeared himself from behind the door he was hiding in that was behind them.

He was carrying a hunting gun. Raven made a stir like he was aiming for an opening to strike, but Edgar made him wait with a look at his eyes.

"To be exact, Mister Barrow was one of two siblings. The older brother was a craftsman and the one who was the savior was the younger brother with the same name who came here later on."

"What do you mean by savior?"

"Although this village was ripe with fluorites, we were only able to dig up a limited amount every year. Even if we tried to dig up more, the fairies would hide them. While that was happening, only he was able to communicate with the fairies and was said to be able to procure the lacking amount of fluorites."

The mayor seemed like he wanted to talk about this.

Most likely, to make his claim that he was right.

"In the beginning, didn't the Blue Knight Earl decide the amount of fluorites that were needed by this village and made a trade with the fairies? And yet, what do you mean there was a lack of fluorites?"

"How can you say that the amount that was determined by the earl in the past will be sufficient in any era? Our village at the time was just barely going by. We were all in trouble."

"I can't think that the amount of fluorites were not enough. In the beginning, if

you were to dig out too much, then the mining vein was sure to drain out, so did the villagers also agree to the bare minimum amount? What was needed more than that had to be taken care by yourselves."

Like he didn't want to hear that, the mayor continued his own claim.

"Mister Barrow had gone by made it so that we could freely dig up the fluorites that the fairies were getting in our way of. We singled out the stones that had a stronger red to them and if we lied that they were freyas, we were able to sell them at a higher price. To put labor in acquiring the artistic skills to make sculptures is ridiculous. If we shatter them and are able to get even a little shard that is red, then we can make a much larger profit than turning it into a piece of art."

"Ever since then, this village has been deceiving your lord and continued to fraud and sell fakes."

"The earl will never appear. Even the butler, Mister Tomkins who manages the fortunes of the Ashenbert family knows that no freyas can be dug up, and so if we don't report to him, he doesn't become suspicious. For fake freyas to go about the market was normal from the past, so Mister Barrow took particular care in making sure they were sold so that it wasn't found out they were related to our village."

"And he went around acting like he was the lord here."

"He carries the blood of the Ashenbert family. What problem could there possibly be?"

"If he is the descendant of the illegitimate child, then he cannot inherit the title."

"More than the title, this village needed the amazing power that was in the blood of the Ashenbert family."

".....And the older brother who was in craftsmanship? He would surely object to his younger brother."

By looking at the number of sculptures that had love poured on them, he couldn't believe that the older brother would allow his younger brother's method of shattering them into pieces.

The mayor only made a barely small grin, but seeing how the tradition of the

artwork of this village had suddenly disappeared, it was easy to imagine what had happened.

Most likely, he must have been killed by the hands of his younger brother.

"Mister Barrow would periodically visit the village and made it so that the fairies couldn't get near the mining grounds. The second Barrow who took after him was the same and possessed magical powers. If we did as Mister Barrow said, then everything would go well.... Everything was going well, until yesterday."

"One of the infants of this village was stolen, and you ordered the parent to give it up, and only share the profits with only one portion of the village? You are quite the tyrant."

"In order to get freyas, it couldn't be helped that the infant was sacrificed. Mister Barrow visited this land two years ago saying that he would be able to awaken the dragon Wyrm that could create a true freya. Thanks to him, we will be able to mine the flaming fluorite."

Awaken a dragon?

Did he say dragon?

The mayor twisted his lips at the confused Edgar.

"Lord Earl, if you claim to be the true Blue Knight Earl, then you just need to defeat the dragon on this land. Just like the earl had done in the past."

It seemed like he wanted to say it was impossible for him.

"The villagers in the past had given up freyas in order to make the harm done by changelings go away. They begged the earl to defeat the dragon. However, our new lord did the opposite of that. Because he possessed that much power, he had the right to be the lord of this land. Since no one other than Ulysses Barrow has inherited the power of the earl."

He wondered if it was the Ulysses he knew who came to this village two years ago.

The right-hand man of Prince and the who was after Edgar's life.

There seemed to be no mistake that that Ulysses was the descendant of the illegitimate child of the Blue Knight Earl.

The descendant of the collateral bloodline of Julius Ashenbert should have been

all killed off by Prince who saw them as a danger. However, most likely, by Ulysses going over to Prince's side, he was able to survive.

No only did Prince get his hands on the one who possessed the power of the Blue Knight Earl, but also killed off all the other descendants.

In order to make that power his own.

Which means, it was Prince who wanted the freya to go all the way to even awaken a dragon.

"Where is the freya? It still shouldn't have fallen into the hands of Ulysses."

"That is a stone of immortality, only those who carry the Blue Knight Earl's blood can handle it. With you, just like that merrow's sword, it would just be a useless rock."

As he aimed the end of his hunting rifle at them, the mayor slowly stepped backwards.

There was one more door in the back of the room. When he opened that door, he suddenly turned around and went running off.

Immediately, Raven went after him.

Edgar continued. There was no mistake that the mayor had the freya with him.

The reason he was taking time here when he should be escaping must have been to take the freya with him.

Most likely, it was hidden in a room that was hidden behind the wardrobes.

At the end of the underground tunnel, it opened up to a natural limestone cave.

Sea water had gotten into it, making a bay that had a small boat floating in it.

The mayor jumped in and they saw him rowing off, but by the time Edgar and the two had reached the bayside, the boat was already at a distance too far from the bay to reach by hand.

Just when they worried that he might escape at this rate, there was something that swept by right in front of them.

Or more like, something enormous came jumping out and took over the air space before them.

That thing seemed like it was suffocating and was thrashing around with its whole body. It slammed up against the wall and ceiling of the limestone cave.

Edgar and the two didn't think to react but immediately dropped to the ground,

but he was able to see out of the corner of his eye how the mayor and the small boat was hit and went flying and then went sinking into the sea.

And then, that thing opened up its mouth side and spitted out some kind of gray ball. And like it suddenly regained its calm, it swiftly went slinking away.

"......What was that just now?"

"A dragon perhaps."

Replied Raven, like it was a matter-of-fact.

A dragon, huh. As he stood himself up, Edgar felt like he wanted to laugh out loud.

After becoming the Blue Knight Earl, even though there were fairies who were shaped like cats and horses around him, there shouldn't be any reason for him to be surprised for a dragon to exist.

"It looked like a gigantic snake or lizard."

"Ohh, god damn it, I thought I was going to die-"

The voice could be hear from the gray-colored piece of filth that was spitted out by the dragon.

It, which had been clinging onto the ground, plopped itself up and frantically combed down its wet fur that was covered with the saliva of the dragon.

"Nico! What happened to you? Weren't you with Lydia?"

"What? Earl?"

When he saw and realized Edgar, then Nico suddenly stood up and yelled out angrily.

"If you were watching then would you go kill that thing for me. That's right, you should hurry and do it. If that thing was left alive, nothing good for anybody is going to happen. If it was the merrow's sword, then you'll be able to split it in two just like the Blue Knight Earl in that past. Since it's a monster that nearly gobbled up my beautiful self!"

"So you're saying I have to defeat that?"

Nico took a good look at Edgar who was staggered and utterly perplexed, and he finally understood and buried his head into his paws.

"Ohh, yes, yes, right, you were only just a Blue Knight Earl in name only! There's no way you could defeat it!"

When he was said that so plainly, it was true, but it still irritated him.

"Ahh, damn it, how dare it put me through something like this, how am I suppose to get back at it?"

"More importantly, where's Lydia?"

"I don't know. As soon as we neared the nest, suddenly the Wyrm appeared, and everyone got separated. I was slurped right up, but I used all my might to not get swallowed, and so I scratched its tongue as much as I could."

"So, Lydia is still in the dragon's nest?"

"Yeah, most likely. At least she should be with that kelpie."

With Kelpie. It wasn't a situation that made a pleasant state of mind for Edgar. However, for the time being, it looks like it was better that she had Kelpie with her.

"However, I heard that Lydia had gone to investigate about Betty. Why on earth did she go and enter a dangerous place like a dragon's nest?"

"Because that's where Betty is. The one who had kidnapped her, had apparently offered her as the bride for the Wyrm."

"A bride for that gigantic lizard just now?"

"O-oh, right, just because she's gotten lost in the Wyrm's nest, by that personality of Lydia's, you don't know what she'll do in order to get back Betty and the stolen baby."

Nico looked like he was finally able to calm down his rage as he was beginning to get worried about the sake of Lydia.

To get back Betty from that dragon when humans would appear like tiny ants that it could step on without noticing seemed impossible. However, if what she was dealing with was fairies, then Lydia, who thought of herself as a fairy doctor might go and do something reckless.

"About that dragon, did Lydia know about that from the start?"

"Yeah, immediately when we arrived, since the dobie was talking about it."

"Then, why did she go without saying anything to me..."

As he said that, Edgar had figured out why she had been keeping silent about the existence of the dragon.

Even if Edgar was able to uncover the misdeeds of the mayor, it was because he

would not be able to go against a dragon.

As he gripped the sword on his belt, Edgar bit his lip.

"Nico, guide me to the Wyrm's nest."

"Eh? You plan on going?"

"I can't leave Lydia by herself."

And I couldn't leave her with Kelpie and herself.

"But, you're not any use at all....."

Edgar was irritated once again and pointed the merrow's sword right at Nico.

"No matter what, I am the Blue Knight Earl."

"Your opponent isn't human, you know. Your bluffs won't work on it."

"It's always the knight to be the one to defeat the dragon to save the princess. I happen to be descended from a knight."

"You're serious."

I'll do it, thought Edgar to himself, so that it would raise his fighting spirits.

Even if Ulysses was the bloodline of the Blue Knight Earl, and even if he had the power to control fairies, the earl who obtained the merrow's sword was me.

Most likely, somewhere in him, Edgar had the feeling that he wouldn't be able to become the real Blue Knight Earl at this state.

The College of Arms of this country had officially recorded Edgar as the Earl of Ibrazel. Although, the invisible power that connected the human and fairy world and continued the Ashenbert family to this day had given the sword to Edgar, it might be testing him as it was keeping an eye on him.

Was it the bond of blood that was needed in the lord of the Ashenbert family? Because it shouldn't be only that, wasn't it why the merrows had entrusted the sword to Edgar. If that were so, then even fighting with the dragon, wasn't something that he could step away from the start.

"Uh.....Earl. Before that, could I go wash myself?"

"We don't have that kind of time."

Nico, whose necktie was pocked by the tip of the blade let out a sigh of resignation.



"The Wyrm's rose? I don't know about that. I've never seen any grass or trees

growing inside this limestone cave."

Betty was guiding Lydia to the place she said was her house.

It was a stone house that stood in the middle of a cavern. That awkward sight made Lydia realize that this was the territory that was casted under the spell of the Wyrm.

"I said that I couldn't live without a human house. And then in the next morning, this was here. But, it's shaped like a house, but everything inside it is made of rock. A stone bed and a stone chair. Well, since the Wyrm doesn't want to come in to such a cramped place like this, then that itself should be a pleasant relief for me."

She had Kelpie go search for Lota and Nico.

Lending a hand to Betty, the two of them pushed open the heavy stone door and entered inside, and just like she said, it was a room that was filled with stone.

"Uh, Betty, about your food, were you eating only the things that were being brought to you from the dobies outside?"

"Yes. It's because the Wyrm's food is only rocks. I thought I was going to starve to death."

Which means Betty still hasn't put any fairy food in her mouth. If Lydia was able to take her out of here, she would be able to take the girl to the human world.

"It's all right, Betty. You'll be able to escape from here. Kelpie is going to find Lota and bring her here, and then we're going to leave immediately."

Betty still had a look of distrust, like she couldn't believe that, and set herself down on the stone chair.

"I consider that all of this happened as a punishment to me. Because I made a big lie. That seal-engraved ring, I.... That's right, the fire-colored fluorite, that earl was after that."

"Earl....."

"A young boy who called himself the Blue Knight Earl. He looked like he was younger than I was, but he was strangely mature."

"Did he perhaps have faint blond hair?"

Betty nodded. Its Ulysses, thought Lydia.

Before two years ago, when Betty claimed to have been brought here, Ulysses must had come to this village at the order of Prince before Edgar had gotten the title of Earl and was claiming himself as the Blue Knight Earl.

The involvement between Prince and the Blue Knight Earl was still a mystery to her even now. Even if it was a coincidence that Edgar, who Prince tried to make his puppet, had become the Blue Knight Earl, she wondered if that was going to be a savior to Edgar or not. Or perhaps, was it going to make him sink deeper in the fight between Prince like it was his destiny.

She didn't want that to be so. Lydia had given her help so that Earl would become Earl, because she believed that was the method that would save him.

I have to pull myself together. I have to be the one to stop what Ulysses is doing.

"That boy is a magician. He had awakened the Wyrm's sleep by using a firecolored fluorite. He said that if the Wyrm wakes up, then the same type of fluorites like that crested ring would be able to be dug up."

"I see. So your crested ring was what he was after. Even though you departed from America and left your close friends so that you could meet your grandfather, the Grand Duke of Cremona."

"That isn't me. I'm not the real princess of Cremona. I'm just a daughter of a pirate. Because I stole only hat ring!"

"That's not right, Betty, because that was something I gave to you."

Lota was standing in the open stone doorway.

"I had always been thinking that you were living a peaceful life by the Grand Duke. And yet, because of that red fluorite, I didn't know you were brought to a place like this....."

Lota entered into the stone house slowly, and she appeared to be alone. She must have been wondering around the cavern and had come to this place.

Oh, goodness, where on earth is Kelpie searching?

More than that, what does Lota mean, she gave the crested ring to Betty?

Lydia kept her mouth closed as she watched the two of them at the sudden unexpected story.

"I stole it. No, I was thinking of borrowing it in the beginning, but I took it out on

my own and was showing it off to everyone around me. And then, John told me that it was the crest of a royal family and in a matter of time, someone who said he was a messenger of the grand duke appeared and said that he was looking for the granddaughter who had the crested ring, and by then, I had just ended my relationship terribly with him and was feeling horrible, and Papa had just died, and I thought it didn't matter if I lose everything if I could become a princess, and so I betrayed even you, and said that it was my ring."

"You were saying that you hated pirates, so I thought you wanted to become a princess. I preferred the style of pirating, and that's why I considered that I gave the ring to you. But, afterwards I was told by that man John. You thought that Pino and I were together?"

Betty made a panic-stricken face and turned to eyes away to look down.

"That's such a stupid misunderstanding. The two of us are practically sister and brother. No, more like brothers. Pino wanted to hurry up and become a mature, strong man, and when I asked him who he was doing that for, he would turn quiet, but his eyes were always following you."

".....No, you're lying, Pino was always complimenting about you, Lota,"

"It was the type of compliments like who I knocked out, or that I won a fight, right? There's no guy who would compliment a girl he likes like that."

Betty went completely silent like she was totally confused.

"I thought it was something like that. You purposefully kept on deceiving yourself and went after lean-looking guys who were the exact opposite of Pino, and Pino was depressed every time. The both of you are all so twisted."

Betty had said she had lost her interest in Edgar because of Ermine, but the both of them weren't able to tell their feelings to the one they really loved, and so they were two who were similar to each other and wanted someone as a replacement.

Even now, Edgar desired a replacement and was flirting around with every girl.

Even though, anyone, even Lydia, wasn't able to be a replacement for the person he truly cared about.

"Hey, Betty, at that time didn't you take a chance with John so that you could get over Pino. If that man, who couldn't flirt with the girl he really loves, would come to make you his number one. But that didn't happen. Just around then, the man who said was searching for the princess appeared, and if the one who the ring really belonged to was revealed, then you thought that Pino and I would get separated, didn't you. Because you didn't want Pino to go through pain, you said that the ring belonged to you."

"You're so soft-hearted, Lota."

"I'm not wrong, I would know what you would think. You're so selfish and would throw others around, but you would never betray your friends."

Betty covered her face with her hands and burst out crying.

Lota wrapped her arms around her as if to comfort her.

Lydia felt tears weld up in her eyes, and thought now, I really have to rescue Betty from the Wyrm no matter what.

Just then, the ground rumbled terribly.

It sounded like the whole limestone cave was shaking, and it gradually seemed to come closer.

"It's the Wyrm," whispered Betty in fear.

It felt like the air outside the building was one pins and needles.

"It's calling me, I have to go."

"To the Wyrm?"

"Because I've been slacking on cleaning, it seems to be upset."

Lota grabbed Betty's arm to stop her from getting up.

"It's all right, I'm just going to be yelled at. It threatens to eat me if I disobey, but I've never put through anything painful."

"No, there's no need for you to have to obey the Wyrm anymore."

And then Lota pushed Betty over towards Lydia.

"Lydia, I'm leaving her to you."

"Eh, but Lota,"

In no time to stop her, Lota went out through the doorway.

Just then, she let out a loud yell.

"Hey, Wyrm! From today your bride is going to be me. Since Betty has already left!"

Lydia and Betty held their breaths inside the building.

"What is Lota planning to do..."

"Wait, if you go out now then you might anger the Wyrm. We need to watch what's going to happen."

As Lydia stopped Betty from going, she slowly eased herself to take a look outside.

Towards the top of the stone, there were a pair of red eyes that was peering down over towards their direction. Those eerie eyes stared looked down at Lota.

(You are going to be? Don't think you can do as you please. I only take noble maidens as my wife.)

"I know that. Even in fairytales, its always a princess that the dragon slays. But, the real princess is me. Betty was just a replacement for me."

The dragon's irises that looked like they were split down the center of its eye, opened wide in surprise at Lota.

(The real princess?)

"Didn't you notice? For a noble maiden, wasn't that girl boorish, half-hearted and irresponsible?"

Betty puffed up her cheeks like she was a little offended.

(Indeed, she couldn't learn quickly and was quick to sulk. I was thinking of what a unmanageable wife she was.)

"I can do housework much better than Lota," whispered Betty quietly.

If Betty was able to escape from here, it seems like Lota didn't mind to leave behind as the real bride of the Wyrm.

However, Lydia didn't want to leave Lota here as well like this.

But still, she thought that this situation was better than the one before.

By having Lota exchange with Betty, the changeling that was once exchanged with the wooden doll has become Lota. Betty would be released from the bind of the Wyrm's magic.

As Betty as here a very long time, that time alone was enough of an magic influence, so it wouldn't be easy to lead her outside, but there still was a chance to get her out without having her being bound to the Wyrm.

On the other hand, she wouldn't be able to get Lota out, who became the

changeling, but as long as she ripped apart the Wyrm's rose then she would be pushed out of here since she still wasn't adjusted to this place.

In the end, Lydia had to take the dangerous step of getting near the Wyrm, but if that would save everyone, even the stolen baby then that means it was worth for her to brave that danger.

Lota was still continuing to explain to the Wyrm.

"Wasn't your bride the Grand princess of Cremona? I'm saying that I'm her. So, that means you'll have to forget about Betty."

There was a silent moment, and then the Wyrm said Alright.

(Come.)

The two large eyes blinked two, three times and backed away from the hole in the wall. At that same time, the Wyrm swayed its body again, and the rumble of the ground started again.

Lota quickly turned her head to the stone house and nodded to Lydia as if make sure of her and walked off towards the direction of the Wyrm's rumbling.

"Hey, she's going to go."

"Yes, but for now, let's go along with her plan."

"Are you intending on abandoning Lota? I never won't!"

"I know, I won't abandon her. But I first need to get you out of here. Since I can't do two at a time."

"Are you saying that I should trust you? More than that, who are you in the first place. Lota's friend? No, that's impossible, no matter how I look at you, you're a girl from a decent family."

"Ummm, I'm...."

"Lydia is a fairy doctor. Because she's a specialist in fairies, you came all this way in order to rescue you, you know."

Kelpie had appeared.

"Well, I didn't find Lota but instead this one."

As Kelpie said that tiresomely, he leaned up against the doorframe. From behind him, Pino came inside the house.

"Pino, how on earth did you come here....."

"To tell you the truth, I had one of my men follow after Lota and you. Since he

said that you gals entered into a crack in the rocks in a small boat, and since I finished up everything over there, I got worried and came myself. Although I lost my way when I was inside the hole."

So what was happening with the mayor was taken care of. And Edgar? Lydia nearly was going to ask that, but she fought it back.

Because that would seem like she was worried about him.

When Pino turned his neck towards Betty, he slowly walked over towards her.

"I wanted to see you. I've been so worried."

Betty had her head down and remained silent.

"Let's go back to America. We can go see the grave of the old captain and I can give him the report of the marriage."

"Marriage? Who is?"

"You and I."

"Huh? Becoming a pirate's wife is something I..."

"You don't want to be a pirate's wife?"

".....It's not like I don't want to be."

"Then it's decided."

Pino made a smile as best as he awkwardly could.

"Decided, so, that's it? I haven't heard the most important part."

"What important part?"

"Of course, like how you feel."

"Hey, Lydia, isn't there no time for something like this?"

Kelpie butted in, and Lydia came to her senses as she was seriously watching over how the sudden proposal was proceeding.

"Y-you're right. The two of you can discuss that in depth later. Pino, then I'll ask you to take care of Betty. If the two of you look for the exit then it's sure to work. Hey, Betty, since the Wyrm's magic doesn't work on Pino, you have to believe that he is your lifeline and follow him. Pino, you must strongly wish in your head that you will absolutely get Betty back. You must not get lost or let go of each other's hands. If your wish wins against the magic, then your wishes will be granted. That's the rule in the fairy realm."

Betty stared hard at Lydia and nodded.

"Lota, she'll get out too, won't she."

"Of course. Make sure to hold her hand in your heart. That will become the strength to bring her back."

As she heard Kelpie throw out the question if that kind of proposal was what she wanted, Lydia watched the two of them head out as they held each other's hands.

Chapter 6 - The dragon's forest and magical thorns

In order to rescue a human who was exchanged by a fairy or taken away, there were numerous ways that were passed down from long ago.

There was a precise method and methods that didn't have that much effect. There were times when they would work, and times when they fail and you would lose that person for eternity.

However, from the past, there were a number of instances where one would somehow manage to enter into the dwellings of the fairy and try to retrieve their precious someone.

It was dangerous, but for a human who didn't have any magic or any powers to use to fight against fairies, they could only decide on bringing back that someone for sure and act accordingly.

The law of the fairy world, for some odd reason, there was one thing it couldn't break, the strong bond between a person and person.

Lydia dazed in wonder why that was so.

Maybe it was because it was something that didn't exist between fairies.

She wondered if that was somehow connected to why they would go and try to steal people's babies.

The further they went into the depths of the limestone cave, the wider it became.

Lydia kept on going deeper with Kelpie as she grew nervous at the thought that beyond here was the sleeping grounds of the Wyrm.

Lydia was thinking about finding Lota and Martha's baby and to rip apart the Wyrm's wild rose over and over again in her mind. Because that was the only method.

For some reason, Lydia stopped her pace.

"Hey, do you hear something?"

"What?"

"......A musical tune, it's Lota's ocarina!"

Lydia ran into the direction of where the music was coming from.

"Hey, wait now, what are you going to do if the Wyrm is near Lota's side!"

Not paying heed to Kelpie's warning, she went into and beyond a temple like place that had a row of stone pillars next to each other.

She spotted Lota who was sitting on top of a huge stone and playing her ocarina, but right next to her, there was a tall, enormous wall covered in scales. It wasn't a wall, but the side of the Wyrm's stomach. Its head had passed by this space and must be resting in the depths of this cave so she couldn't see it, and then Lydia was pulled by Kelpie and hid behind in the shadows of one of the pillars.

From there, she peeked out to check on Lota. She tossed a small rock so Lota would notice her.

Lota found them and stopped playing her ocarina, and checked on how the Wyrm was doing, and it seemed like it was fast asleep as its body didn't move at all.

Lota slowly stood up and walked over towards Lydia's direction. However, there was a shackle and chain tied onto Lota's ankle.

"Lota, that chain...."

"Ah, yeah, it said that a human who just came to this kind of place might try to escape. It said that eventually it was going to take it off of me."

That was because after some time had passed and the human was influenced by the fairy's magic, it would be more difficult to return to the human world.

"You better get out of here before that wakes up. It ordered me to sing some song and when I played this ocarina, it went to sleep immediately, but it said I have to prepare a meal by the time it wakes up. It looks like I have to smash rocks apart. But it should be the one to do that."

It seemed like Lota was already quite tired of this.

"Pino had come. He's going to get Betty out. That's why we're here to rescue you."

"It's the Wyrm's chain. It won't be easy to cut it off," said Kelpie.

"It's all right. If I cut the wild rose, then the power that is making the changeling

people stay here will disappear. Then this chain won't be of any use."

"Wild rose?" asked Lota.

"Somewhere in this nest, there should be a wild rose that the Wyrm is growing."

"Is that something really precious to it? Then, I was told not to go into that forest over there, but I don't know where that would be."

"Forest? I wonder if there's some place where trees are going."

Anyhow, Lydia thought that she needed to go and search for it.

"Lota, I need to ask you to bear this just a while more. And also, think about the people who are most precious to you. You have to strongly wish that your returning for those people's sake."

"Got it, but Lydia, are you going to be all right?"

She looked at her with worried eyes, that she jolted her.

"Y-yes. Since this is my job."

"Who are you thinking about?"

"Eh?"

"In order to return home from here."

For an instant, Edgar might have come to her mind.

".....About my father."

"I see."

However, to think about her father was too natural for her. The two of them understood each other too much, so it was too weak of a bond to tie her to the human world.

But still, the reason that Lydia was able to view the human world even a little likeable was because her father was there and it was the world her mother chose.

There most likely wasn't any attachment for her right now that could replace that.

"You know, I might want to go and meet my grandpa," said Lota as she was thinking that over.

"I'm not the type to be a princess, and I thought I didn't care about my birth.

And that what I had built up with the captain who raised me and the people

around me was the most important thing to me. But, when I heard that my grandpa hadn't given up and continued to search for me, then I realized it. I want to find out more about myself, and I want to hear about my parents. I want to meet my grandpa who hadn't forgotten about me."

"You can meet him, most definitely. That kind of feeling is what will draw away the deluding power of the fairies."

Lota nodded strongly and she gripped Lydia's hand.

They hadn't noticed it, but the snoring of the Wyrm that had been vibrating the air around them had stopped.

Lydia turned her head nervously.

"Hey, Lydia, the Wyrm has-"

Kelpie peered up. When they were looked down by two large eyes from near the limestone cave ceiling, the shadow of the pillar they were hiding was in open view.

(Who are you two. I won't forgive you for entering into my palace without my knowledge.)

"Run."

Lydia's arm was pulled.

"Lydia, watch out!"

At the same moment Lota yelled out, there was something that came swinging into their direction. It seemed like the Wyrm had swung its tail.

If Kelpie didn't scoop Lydia up into his arms and swiftly jump to evade it, she was sure to be smashed against the stone pillar.

"Damn."

Kelpie tutted because the passageway that they turned back to try and enter was blocked by the Wyrm's body that was like a tall wall.

"Over here, Lydia!"

There was a voice that came from another direction.

It was Edgar. Why was he here?

Still not figuring out why, Lydia ran into the tall splitting hole that she saw him in.

In the second Kelpie and her had slipped into the crack of the stone, the Wyrm's

body that slammed against the stone, making the area around them shake.

But still, the giant stone didn't crumble.

The Wyrm tried to stick one of its claws into the crack. However, it seemed like there was nothing it could do, so it gave up and must have gone away, as it fell silent.

Breathing in relief, Lydia turned around. There was Edgar, and Raven and Ermine.

Then, she was embraced by Edgar.

"Thank god I made it."

He set both hands to turn her head up and he looked down at her.

"Are you hurt anywhere?"

At times like these, Edgar treated her naturally like his fiancée. It was much too natural that it made Lydia feel like she was wrong for feeling that this was awkward, so it was quite troublesome.

Even as she was taken aback, Lydia pushed out both arms and managed to separate from him.

"I heard the story from Nico. If you would have told me at the start, then I wouldn't have let you gone by yourself."

"She's not alone. You can see I was with her."

Completely ignoring the existence of Kelpie, Edgar kept on talking as he gradually pressing Lydia more and more near the wall.

"I know why. You were thinking that even if I came along, there was nothing I could do about fairies, right? But, I have to tell you, I have the responsibility in protecting you. Saying you didn't know isn't going to forgive you."

".....But I"

He must have sensed Lydia wanted to say, I am not your real fiancée.

"I have the responsibility as your employer. More so since its trouble happening on my lands."

"....I'm sorry. It wasn't supposed to turn out like this. I just came so that I could some information and then....."

But if she were to show even just a little honest part of herself, Edgar would take advantage and get elated. And sure enough, he touched Lydia's hair with

his hand like a lover would do and narrowed his ash mauve eyes in a longing way.

"It's all right, as long as you were safe. Because the thing I fear the most would be not being able to touch you like this again."

Ermine and Raven were with them, and yet why on earth was he able to do something so embarrassing like this.

However the two of them were waiting so calmly like this was natural. Only Kelpie was making a unruly face and kicked the wall.

"More importantly, I found Betty. I think Pino will be able to lead her out. What's left is Lota who made herself the replacement of Betty and if I could find Martha's baby...."

"The problem is how we are going to rescue them, right."

Lydia's heart was already decided. However, for Edgar and others to come here was unexpected.

"Ummm, was it just the three of you who came into here? Where's Nico?"

"He should have been with us, but since he was nearly eaten by the dragon, I think he might not want to get any closer."

Oh my god, he was nearly eaten.

Even as she pitied him just a little, she thought it really was heartless of him to throw in the towel during the middle of it.

More than that, Lydia tried to think about any points in her plan that she needed to change. Even if she broke the Wyrm's wild rose, there was no harmful effects on the other fairies. Ermine and Kelpie were fine. Edgar and Raven were living human beings so there wasn't going to be any magic to influence them, so as long as they headed to the sea, they should be able to get out of the cave.

She had to believe that Betty would be brought out by Pino.

As for Lydia, she didn't know what would happen, but the wild rose shouldn't be able to be seen by a regular human and a fairy wasn't even able to touch it with their hands. So she was the only one who could do it.

"Anyhow, we should get outside once. We should calm down and then try to think of a way to rescue out the two of them."

At Edgar's suggestion, however, Lydia shook her head strongly to the sides.

"I can't, there is only one method. I'm going as I am."

"But, Lydia,"

"So all of you go home."

Edgar reacted like he was dumbfounded.

Kelpie laughed.

"Earl, even if it was a skirt-chaser like you, it seems like it isn't that easy for you to make her do as you want."

"I just don't want to put Lydia in a dangerous situation."

"I'm saying that's useless. Now as for me, I'll go along with her selfishness. She keeps saying tiring things like to button her up and don't touch my breasts, but that is nothing. I'm willing to enter a Wyrm's nest with her."

Hey, Kelpie-!

"Button? Breast?"

Just as she feared, Edgar reacted to that part.

"You did something fowl to my fiancée? You forced yourself on her when she fought back,"

No, there was no such thing.

"If that's true, then I have the right to kill you."

Edgar stepped near Kelpie.

"Even though you can't even kill me?"

"Stop it already!"

Lydia broke into the middle of them.

"Lydia, this is a problem about our honor."

"It's not like that!"

"Lord Edgar, the dragon has appeared again," spoke up Raven.

In the wide open space beyond the crack opening, everyone felt the vibration of the Wyrm as it crawled on its stomach, making them all nervous.

"This is bad," murmured Kelpie.

"Hey, hurry and run. I sense fire. The Wyrm's going to breathe fire!"

Edgar grabbed Lydia's arm and bolted into a run.

All of them at once ran into the depths, and from behind, Lydia heard the

strange sound of regurgitation and an extreme melting hot temperature and turned around.

In the distance it was strangely red and so bright.

Kelpie stopped behind them.

"I'll stop it so hurry up and go!"

"B-but, if it's the Wyrm's fire, you'll be in danger."

Lydia tried to stop from running, but Edgar didn't allow her.

"Kelpie, I won't make your sacrifice a waste."

He left with that line which could be hear like a joke and tried to go.

"Huh? If it turns really dangerous, I'm going to bolt out of here! That's why until then, I'm saying you better hurry up and get somewhere far away!"

And then, perhaps in order to calm Lydia down as she kept on turning her head back to see him repeatedly, he carelessly said,

"Lydia, we're going to hurry up and get this over, and then the two of us are going to go live in the Highlands. Don't forget. No, even if you forget, I'm going to slay you there!"

Hearing that voice from behind her back, they went along the path that curved to the side, and then Lydia couldn't see the sight of Kelpie anymore.

With that pace, she kept running with Edgar through the complicated twisting paths.

When they decided that they were far from the dangers of the fire, they finally stopped. Lydia was already out of breath, and so she couldn't speak up for a while.

Raven and Ermine said they were going to inspect on the area near the village and after saying that they left, and Edgar still had his hand on Lydia's hand as she was catching her breath and spoke to her like he was pressing her for an answer.

"You will tell me what the meaning of that is."

She couldn't understand what he meant immediately.

"That horse said living with you in the Highlands."

"That's...."

She couldn't tell him that she might come to forget about everything.

Because that would be like she was coming up with an indefinite parting.

She was confused at herself for feeling afraid of that, and it nearly made her cry so Lydia lowered her eyes.

Edgar seemed to not know what to do at how Lydia acted, and stroked her hair as if to calm her down.

"Uh, it isn't like I'm trying to blame you. Don't worry, whatever happens, my feelings won't change."

Those were his usual suave lines. But, if she was told something like that, she couldn't tell him even more.

"It's true, don't you believe me? Even if that Kelpie had forced himself on you, that kind of thing won't become a hindrance to our marriage."

Huh?

"What are you...."

"Just because you were nearly attacked by Kelpie, it doesn't mean you have to think of yourself as impure."

Hold on just a moment, what is he talking about?

"I was not attacked!"

"I know. You are the type that won't even allow me as your fiancé to kiss you, so even if it was something small, it makes you feel like you were unfaithful, right? But if something like that would make you marry Kelpie, then how I treated you like a gentleman would make me look like an idiot."

He doesn't understand at all, does he.

And, like a gentleman, he says? How did he?

"I said you're wrong! About the buttons, I just had him give me a hand in buttoning me up. That's, well, because he's a fairy and not a male human. The rest is, just an accident, when we both fell down..., that's all that is!"

He looked down into Lydia's eyes as if to make sure.

"Really? Then, you don't feel hurt at anything."

"Would you stop guessing at every possible ulterior motive."

Even though Lydia was so embarrassed and irritated, making her bright red, Edgar pulled her shoulders into his arms like he was relieved from the bottom of his heart.

He didn't let her go that easily, and when Lydia wiggled around to express her displeasure, his hand touched a button on her back.

Suddenly, Lydia grew tense and went completely frozen.

Even if she was all right with Kelpie, she didn't know why Edgar's hand touching even one button made it feel like having a meaning.

"Well, yes, even if he is a fairy or horse, he still is a male, so it's best you become more precautious. That's why, next time, I'll give you a hand, whenever you want to undress."

Just when she thought he was seriously worried about her, he would go joke around.

"I don't need it!"

She put strength in both her arms and pushed Edgar away.

"Besides, you said that you would give up."

But there's still time remaining. And to give up, is only when you said no. I want you to think hard if you really need me or not and then make an answer."

And then, it would turn into a serious conversation.

When he made a serious expression and if she haphazardly rejected him as usual, she felt that then, he might really lost interest in her.

He won't try to touch me like his lover not ever again?

That should be fine. Then I could live my life in peace.

Am I all right with that?

But this kind of promise, I can't figure out if he's serious or not.

That doesn't matter. Lydia should make a reply just as her heart tells her.

".....I understand."

"Now then, let's return to the subject. It isn't like you were treated unfairly by Kelpie, which means, why would he say something like that?"

Oh, why couldn't he just let it go.

Even though Edgar would smartly put things in the dark when it was something unpleasant for him, but he would press Lydia for an answer till the very end.

However, in this case, there wasn't any time to be pressed for answers.

Because they heard the howling cry that echoed throughout the cave.

Just then, the ground started to rumble again.

It was a violent earthquake that couldn't be put into comparison with the vibration when the Wyrm moved.

She saw that Raven and Ermine were hurrying to come back to them, but Lydia wasn't able to stand up straight and clung onto a near-by stone pillar.

"Lydia, get away from there!"

When she shot her eyes up at Edgar's voice, she saw that the pillar that had a long crack in it was just about to topple over.

She tried to grab his hand that he reached out to her, but she was a little short of reach.

A large crater started to open up beneath Edgar's feet. She saw that Raven save him by practically falling down onto the ground with him, but the crater that rapidly opened wide started to head towards Lydia's direction.

Lydia's arm was grabbed and she was pulled away from the pillar.

"Ermine...."

"Please jump to the other side!"

During the time Lydia was fumbling around, she used all her strength and pushed Lydia out.

When Lydia looked back, the place that she was just standing was about to crumble and take Ermine down with it.

"Ermine!"

Lydia yelled out to her, but there was nothing she could do. As she evaded the rocks that came crashing down, she was pulled into an opening in the rocky wall and was barely able to push their two bodies to fit in.

Even if the shaking stopped, Lydia's body couldn't stop trembling.

Edgar stood up and peered down into the deep ravine cliff that was suddenly made.

He called Ermine's name a number of times, but there was no answer, and only Edgar's voice echoed against the wall here and there.

"I shall go down and inspect," offered Raven.

"It's dangerous. There might be another earthquake again like just now."

This wasn't the time to shake, thought Lydia and pulled her strength together to stand up.

I have to go search for the Wyrm's wild rose.

That should also be useful in helping Ermine as well.

She thought about calling Edgar, but she stopped herself.

He surely must not want to leave this place, and if she had to do it on her own either way, then she just had to go on her own.

Lydia quietly stepped back and moved away from the two who were looking down at the bottom of the ravine. Her turned her heels and walked off in the direction that seemed the most not to have been affected by the quake.

The quake just now was of course made by the Wyrm. And it seems like it had targeted the area that Lydia and the others had run into.

To go against tiny humans and launch an attack even after it lost sight of them, must mean it was guarding something.

Most likely, the place where the wild rose was is close.

The hint was forest. Normally, forest should mean a group of trees.

Lydia kept on walking as she thought about that.

However, her shoulder was grabbed ahold of out-of-the-blue.

"Where do you think on going by yourself?"

Edgar pulled Lydia to him with a furious expression.

"And you wouldn't stop even if I called for you."

She must have been thinking about the roses so hard and she couldn't hear him at all.

She wasn't able to make herself look at him, and so Lydia lowered her head. She had felt guilty for causing Ermine to fall down, and she thought that Edgar's slightly bad mood was because he was depressed.

That's why Lydia could do what she could only do.

"I'm going to go look for the Wyrm's wild rose."

Edgar couldn't understand what she was saying and tilted his head.

"I was planning on doing that from the start. If I do, then the magic that had built up in the Wyrm's nest will flow out. The changeling baby and Lota would be released, and although it would be momentary, the Wyrm's power would be weakened, so if there is no danger, wouldn't you be able to go rescue Ermine? If it's to search for something, then the dobie would even lend you their hand."

"All right. Then I'm coming too."

"I'll go by myself."

"No, you can't. I had left Raven to take care of that place, and I can't let you go by yourself."

He smiled at her as if to try and kindly talk her into it.

He looked at her with such serious eyes, that whoever saw them would think that there was no mistake in that he was in lover with Lydia.

But, the one he loved wasn't Lydia. He might not have realized that she wasn't the one himself.

Yes, Edgar might not have realized it himself. He might be locking up who it was he really cared for and even tricking himself.

"Because I am your fiancée? Are you thinking that you have the responsibility of staying by my side and protecting me? That's idiotic."

"I'm worried. If something were to happen to you, I couldn't stand it."

Even now, he should be filled with worry about her that he could hardly bare.

"It should have been me who fell."

Lydia couldn't hold it back and spilled that out of herself.

"What are you saying. You know it isn't your fault."

"But, if she didn't save me then she wouldn't have fell."

It was a pointless thing to say now. Edgar must be thinking that. He let out a sigh like he found that a little absurd.

"If it were you, you definitely wouldn't have survived. But with Ermine, there's still hope."

"That's not what I meant."

"Then, what do you mean."

That would have been the better outcome for Edgar.

But that itself was something that was pointless to say. Lydia stayed silent and started to walk off.

Edgar followed after her.

"It's useless even if you follow me. And besides, it might just be that I won't be able to return to London, so you should just give up now."

She was thinking that I want to alone. Lydia was feeling negligent.

"Is that perhaps, what is related to what Kelpie was saying?"

"

"So it is related."

He suddenly rushed up in front of her and stood in her way which nearly made Lydia bump into him.

He took that flow and embraced her so that she couldn't escape from him.

"If you don't tell me straight, I'm going to kiss you."

What kind of threat is that?

She found that absurd, but if both her arms were bound by him and she couldn't move even if she put all her strength into them, and he moved in his body like he was chaining her down, and she didn't only fear the kiss but something more dangerous, and rushed to open her mouth.

"I-It's because I might be a changeling!"

"Why is that related?"

"If I break the fairy's wild rose, then all the magic casted on the things around it will be undone. That's why the captured changeling will be pushed back out into the human world, but in return, fairies who were made to look like humans will return to their fairy form.If I am a changeling, then I'll return to a fairy and forget about everything when I was a human."

When she let that all out at once, Edgar grew suddenly quiet and looked like he was holding back anger.

However, he stroked Lydia's cheek and then her hair in a gentle way like never before.

"Keeping something so important like that from me, how awful of you to try and go by yourself. Is it because I know nothing about fairies? Is it because I'm just the Blue Knight Earl in name only?"

"Th-that's not it...."

"Then, you couldn't say that because it would be too painful for you to separate from me if something were to happen?"

"Eh."

This man's vanity isn't normal.

She decided to forget about how she thought that it might be a little bit painful.

"Even if you become a fairy and even if you forget about everything, I have no intention of giving you to Kelpie."

"You are a human. You won't be able to see me."

Like he was making sure that wasn't so, he cradled Lydia's face with the palm of his hands.

"You are not a changeling. I truly believe that."

"Even if I were human, I have a deep trait related to fairies. If I snap the rose, I'll be thrown into the whirl of the magic. When that happens, I don't know if I will be able to keep my consciousness enough to take me back to the human world. But, I'm thinking that I wouldn't mind that."

"Do you want to become a fairy?"

I don't know. If I were a fairy, my feelings wouldn't get hurt.

"So that means I could never be the one that binds you to the human world."

He said that in such a painful voice, that even Lydia's heart ached.

"I don't know about fairies. And I can't become someone special to you. But still, if there was something I could do, then it would be to not let to be alone. Please don't say you don't even need that. When this is over, let's go home together."

He kissed her on her eyelid, and that wanted to make her cry.

She managed to fight back her tears, and pulled her body back.

"We got to go."

Edgar nodded and held Lydia's hand and started to walk.

She couldn't say that she was going to go alone any more.



The ocean water was cold, and it slowly healed Kelpie's mane and skin that was fanned by the souring heat of the Wyrm's fire.

For a creature like him that lives in fresh water, it couldn't be said that salt water was a comfortable environment, but it was much more livable than being on land.

Sitting down on the bottom of the sea, Kelpie was silently feeling how the magic was returning to his body.

When he recovered, he needed to quickly return to where Lydia was. If she

were to ripe apart the rose, then who knows what was going to happen.

As Kelpie was thinking that, he looked over towards the female figure that was lying right next to him.

That was because she slowly sat herself up.

"You finally woke up."

She looked at Kelpie questioningly, and then she inspected the area around them. She was the female cross-dressed servant of that earl.

If he remembered, her name was Ermine.

"It really is true that you don't have realized grasped the selkie fairy side of you yet. Your swimming was not good at all, so that's why you would do something like get knocked out by a rock sinking down on your head like a human would."

"This is....?"

"The bottom of the sea. I say that, but we're really near the bottom of the Wyrm's cave, really."

"Why are you here?"

"Why I saved your life. If you went sinking down as you are unconscious, then you would have bolder come piling up onto you."

She stared at the aggressive fairy water horse suspiciously.

It must have been something instinctual. Kelpies will kill any creature and eat it. They are feared by fairies as well.

Even if she knew that he was a strange water horse that didn't see the human girl Lydia as food but with affection, she wasn't able to believe that she was rescued.

"Why did you help me."

"If I said it was to eat you, then would you believe me? If I left you alone, then I thought Lydia would get angry at me. Although if you're saying that you'll give me an arm as thanks, I won't refuse."

Because that couldn't be taken as a joke, Ermine had lost her chance to say her thanks but it seemed Kelpie didn't mind that at all.

She tried to stand up but her head still seemed to be dizzy as she sat back down.

"It's burning above up. It's safer to be in the water for a while."

"Aren't the caverns in the sea waters also connected to different places?"

"If you move around too much, then it'll be even more difficult for you to return to the earl."

Ermine rested her hand on a bolder and carefully tried to stand up once more.

"Do you have an idea where the area is right under the center of the village?" "Why."

"There's no need for me to tell you."

"Is that the attitude to ask a question?"

"Then forget it."

Going along the cliff, she wobbled on her way.

Kelpie thought she was a female much more stubborn than Lydia as he stood up. So she's only loyal and obedient towards the earl only, huh.

Or was she....

Ermine sensed that Kelpie was following her and turned around and frowned.

"Don't follow me."

"I'm just going to where I want to go."

"Then you can go in front of me."

"That's also my freedom of choice."

Ermine turned her head away in irritation and started to walk off again, but it was obvious that Kelpie was following after her.

"Why don't you go to where Miss Carlton is then? Isn't it dangerous to get separated from her?"

"Well, there's something that's bothering me."

".....What?"

"It was from quite a far distance away, but I was watching when you fell down. You helped Lydia, and although you had plenty of time to make it, you purposefully took the fall, didn't you."

Ermine kept on walking silently. Kelpie kept on talking as he followed her.

"You realized that below was the sea, and so did you decide you would be all right? But then for what purpose? You want to go to the center of the village? Even if you weren't going to go through any danger, it should be fine to tell that to the earl. No, or you can't allow yourself to let him know? So doesn't that

mean you needed to get separated from the earl and that raven boy without it being suspicious?"

Ermine suddenly turned around and pointed out a knife at Kelpie.

"Nothing good comes out of a blabbering mouth."

"I won't die by a human weapon like a selkie."

"Don't take selkies too lightly."

"Now don't so feisty. It's not like I'm on the side of the earl."

She let out a sigh and withdrew her knife and started to walk off again, and it seemed like she gave up on driving Kelpie away.

She must have thought that it was Kelpie who hated Edgar for forcing Lydia to become engaged with him, so he most likely wouldn't leak this out.

Ermine would periodically float to the surface and made sure of the surrounding landscape as she pressed on.

Kelpie didn't speak up to her anymore and on her part, she was completely ignoring Kelpie's existence.

Ermine's behavior changed near a place where the sea floor steered up and the water was quite shallow, and she had caught the sight of the remains of a small boat.

She thoroughly inspected the area around that, but it seemed like she didn't find the thing she was looking for.

Just then, she saw the light of a torch on the land surface, and she made a cold, stiff face and silently went around to the shadow of a rock without making any ripples in the water.

And then, she slipped out onto the rocky shore soundlessly.

There was sea water that had entered inside the limestone cave. On its bank, there were two men who apparently were villagers.

By their feet, there was a dead body lying on the ground. It must have been a dead body they pulled up from the sea, because the body was drenched and as the clothes that had soaked up the sea water was draining back out, there was red blood that was also seeping out, staining the white limestone.

Suddenly, Ermine jumped out in front of the two men.

With the knife in her hand, she stabbed one of the men who was still taken

aback.

She had completely gone after the heart. She didn't have any signs of showing mercy.

The other man tried to hit her with his torch.

The fire whipped by her face and Ermine flinched and back away. When her foot was caught on the dead body and she lost her balance, the man grinned and swung down the torch.

She knelt down on that spot.

Even though she's injured, what a reckless thing to do for a woman, thought Kelpie as he stood and watched.

Seeing that she wasn't able to stand up right away, the man who was holding the torch turned his back away from her and tried to escape.

Kelpie, most likely from just a fling of whim, stood to block the path of the man. He grabbed the man's head and shoved him back over to Ermine who finally stood up.

"You're fine letting this one escape?"

"No, I'll have him dead."

As she said that, she cut the air with her knife.

Blood went spraying in the air, and the man slumped down to the ground.

Ermine didn't change her expression and checked the fallen man's clothes and when she took out a reddish stone the size of a closed fist, she slipped that into one of her pockets carefully.

And completely exhausted, she sat herself down on one of the rocks.

"If you wanted that, there was no need to kill him."

"I don't want to be told by you."

She was crouching down and holding the knife like she was hugging it. The spurt of blood had painted her pale white face, and that kind of made her look even more beautiful.

She must have killed the men because it would be too much trouble if they talked about this.

However, that was all Kelpie could understand, and he thought that there was no point in staying here after this.

The reason she left the earl's side was in order to get the stone she just retrieved. However, she must have no intentions of telling what it is.

Kelpie turned his heels to leave.

"I won't cause any trouble to Miss Carlton."

I wonder if that's true.

However, she must have wanted to say that by telling that to Kelpie, the thing he just saw wasn't going to be any benefit or disadvantage to him, something completely unrelated to him.



"It's a forest," Lydia couldn't help but mention.

It was just when they came out into an awfully vast open cavern. In that space, there were a vast number of icicles made of limestone standing next to one another.

Their vast numbers made a white forest, filling up the space and blocking their view.

The ceiling was even further up and they were unable to see it because of the smoking vapors.

"So the wild roses might be somewhere deep in there."

Even Edgar made a stunned face as he looked up.

"It's sure to be here."

Lydia knew it.

If the faint sound of the water droplets that dropped from the ceilings overlapped each other, it seemed like they were in the middle of a drizzle.

The water droplets that soaked up lime dropped to the ground which piled and piled up to make the stone pillar higher and higher. It was a forest that made with the help of nature and took a countless amount of time and Lydia marveled at them with amazement.

Edgar went walking over to one of the limestone towers that was nearby and knelt down by it. It was a limestone rock tower that was only just barely at the height of a person.

"Is something the matter?"

"Oh, no, it's just that I thought it looked like a finely-carved statue."

Lydia looked to see it and gasped.

Inside the stone, it looked like there was a baby with its arms and legs curved in mended into it.

"Th-this is a real baby! This must be Martha's baby that was put through the changeling."

"What? But it looks like the baby is turned to stone."

"The Wyrm's magic is casted over it. But, the baby is still warm, means the baby is alive. I have to hurry and save it."

Standing up, Edgar made a knitted his brows as he inspected the forest."

"Are you saying that perhaps, all of these pillars here are people?"

".....I don't know. The dobie had said that the Wyrm turns people into stone and then eats them, but either way, the older ones that have turned into stones completely cannot be saved anymore."

Lydia looked at the stone pillar and made a cross sign with her hand over her chest.

"So from the old days, the Wyrm had eaten people like this and that's how it made the freyas."

In order to break that evil cycle the Blue Knight Earl of the past had sealed away the Wyrm and saved the villagers, but in return the villagers should have accepted that they were never going to be able to mine for any more precious freyas. And yet-

"In order to make money, I can't believe they would sacrifice people again...."

"It seemed like it wasn't about making money, but more like it had some kind of different use than that. The mayor had said that it could only be handled by a person who carried the Blue Knight Earl's blood in them."

It was there he stopped his sentence and suddenly changed the subject.

"By the way, Lydia, do you know of a way to defeat a dragon?"

"A Wyrm cannot be defeated. That's why I am looking for its rose."

"But, there are heros who have defeated dragons in stories from long ago. Like St. George, ohh, but that was against a dragon with wings. Anyhow, the old Blue Knight Earl had put the Wyrm to sleep in the past. And I was wondering what kind of method that was."

The Blue Knight Earl had magical powers. He was able to go back and forth between the fairy realm and human realm and was the lord of the land who governed over the living beings in both worlds.

It was most likely, that the one who carried his blood was only able to defeat the Wyrm. Even the dobie had said that.

However, Edgar was thinking if there was any other method.

"Dragons are powerful, enormous and mysterious. But, you know how they say there is always a weakness? Looking at the examples from all times and places, the thing that can defeat a dragon is someone who acquires a special weapon or someone who has found a weak spot."

He pulled out his sword from its sheath on his waist belt.

The merrow's sword glistened.

"I have a weapon. It's a sword that doesn't stand inferior to fight with a dragon and is a sword that has once defeated the Wyrm before. And yet, even when I use it, I'm not able to cut any fairy. But, what if I find its weak spot? Then even a normal human should be able to defeat it."

"How are you going to find its weakness?"

"That's the problem, but we have no time."

"What?"

Edgar turned his eyes away to scan the area around them as if he was concerned about something, and then there was a rustling sound like a gust of wind blowing over a grassy field.

A faint quiver was shook the stone forest. Lydia finally realized what it was and swiftly turned around.

"The Wyrm....!"

There was a scale-covered wall so high one had to crane their neck up and they finally saw what was slowly passing by in front of their eyes. It seemed like the two of them were completely surrounded by its long snake-like body.

"If you had noticed, then you should have let me know earlier!" gasped Lydia.

"When I noticed, we were already surrounded."

Was that why you began talking about defeating a dragon?

"See, aren't I left with the only option of defeating it?"

Don't 'See' me. I'm afraid of snakes.

It was all right when she still couldn't see its whole body. However when she took a good look around her now, she could see how this long wriggling creature was crawling, and that made Lydia get goose bumps.

Its raised head was looking down at them from a towering high distance.

(Who are you? Why do you have that sword?)

The Wyrm's voice echoed out, shaking the air around them.

"That's because I'm this sword's master."

(You are not the Blue Knight Earl.)



"I am. The one who awakened you is a fake. However now, I will not let that fake do as he pleases. I will have you sealed away once again."

Facing the merrow's sword in front of it, the Wyrm must have become precautious as its ring around them widened.

"Edgar, let's escape. While the threat of the sword is still working."

However, he gripped onto the sword like he was about to start a sword fight.

"Oh, no, I'm going to do this. If I don't, then I won't be able to become the real Blue Knight Earl."

"What are you saying, in the beginning you wanted just the name...."

"That's right, I was the one who gained the name. Because it was me and not him, I will fulfill my duty."

"Him?"

The Wyrm might have sensed the magic in the sword as it kept its glare on the sword and remained still.

"Ulysses. He carries the blood of the illegitimate child of the Blue Knight Earl."

"I-Is that true?Then, the reason why his power of controlling fairies wasn't normal was because it was the power he inherited from the Blue Knight Earl....."

Then there was no way a mere fairy doctor could be a match for him.

"Even he should have tried to get his hands on the sword. But since he wasn't able to, Prince must have thought that the Blue Knight Earl's sword no longer exists. However, this is in my hands. Me, who has no magical powers or any ties with the Ashenbert family."

"Edgar, behind you!"

The Wyrm moved its tail. Edgar, who turned around evaded it as he blocked it with his sword.

The tip of the sword grazed its tail. However, it only clashed with the Wyrm's hard scale and only made a sound like it was clanged against a stone.

The Wyrm must have made sure that Edgar wasn't able to bring out the power of the sword, so it hunched its body back getting ready to make its next serious strike.

Its two front legs covered with sharp nails approached the air above them.

Together with Lydia, he ran into the stone pillared forest.

The Wyrm's front legs crashed down a number of the pillars.

When they hid themselves in the shadows of the endless number of pillars, the Wyrm brought its head up high in order to look for the two of their sight from high above.

"You keep hiding."

Edgar was about to go out once more.

"It's impossible, stop it already."

"If I defeat that, then you wouldn't have to break off the rose by your hands anymore, right? Then you won't have to be put in danger."

"You would die."

Lydia desperately tried to cling on to his arm.

However, he only turned to look at her and didn't hesitate in making a smile.

"I want to make the merrow's sword mine. It would be too arrogant of me to wish to marry you when I nothing to protect you from fairies or magic, right?" "Don't be stupid, even if you don't marry me, that wouldn't trouble you."

The Wyrm found them.

It opened its mouth wide and headed straight for their direction.

Lydia and Edgar bolted out in a run.

However, the stone-pillared forest suddenly ended and a stone wall blocked their path.

"There's a cave opening there!"

As soon as they dashed in, the Wyrm's fangs sank into the place they were just at.

"If I could just find its weakness," murmured Edgar as he checked outside.

She looked out to search the Wyrm's body, but there were no signs of something like that on it.

Like the Wyrm was trying to crumble down the tunnel that the two of them ran into, it slammed its body against the stone wall and threw around its tail covered in hard scales to crack the bedrock.

"Is the weakness something that you can see and find?"

The quake was so hard and violent that Lydia had to sit down.

"The color of the scale might be a different color."

Then, she remembered something.

"That's it, the freya!"

"Eh?"

"The freya that Betty had, was apparently needed in order to awaken that Wyrm. Which means, that it might be somewhere on the Wyrm's body."

I see, said Edgar and started to think up of something.

"If it was that red, then it should stand out."

Inspecting it for the time being, they couldn't see it anywhere.

However, it wasn't going to be that easy to find a red stone the size of a coin from the whole monstrous body of the Wyrm. And its stomach and back was hard to see.

"Now that I recall, I've heard that the Wyrm has the tongue of fire. I thought that was because it blew fire out of its mouth, but maybe, the freya might be on its

tongue."

She just lightly mentioned the possibility, but Edgar gave a deep nod and stood up.

"The tongue, huh.... Then, I'll give it a try."

"Wait, what are you going to do if that's wrong. You'll be eaten in one gulp."

"I'll believe that you're right."

"But-"

He turned to Lydia and took a lock of her hair and kissed it.

"Lydia, I truly do wish to marry you. This is a test for that, so I have to go."

So to Edgar, this was a test he set for himself.

To Lydia, she didn't know if him winning against the Wyrm could be counted as proof of his love. She just thought that it was a man's logic.

But, Lydia could understand that he was trying to change himself for Lydia's sake who had an ability different from humans.

His wish was to be able to use the merrow's sword so that he wouldn't take advantage of Lydia's ability, and truly protect her.

Before she knew it, Lydia had thrown her arms around his neck.

She stood on the tip of her toes and pressed her lips lightly against his cheek.

As she scrambled to back away from him, she was surprised at herself and turned red in the cheeks, but managed to say,

".....Don't die."

".....Thanks."

He didn't make a joke at her or got carried away, and only said that word

because, he himself, was extremely surprised.

Edgar exited out of the cave in the wall out into the space where the Wyrm was thrashing around.

The Wyrm who noticed, took precaution as it stopped its violent behavior.

Oh, no. Is the tongue really the weakness?

She was so scared she couldn't watch.

Lydia nearly took her eyes completely off, when she noticed something shining near the top of the cave she was in.

She squinted her eyes. It was a faint green color and looked liked some kind of bud of grass.

A plant?

Wait, is that, the rose?

She made a quick glance over towards Edgar. The Wyrm was standing up, ready to make a strike any second.

If she could tear the rose, then the Wyrm's magic would be weakened. It's movements should slow down and that should be of help to Edgar.

When Lydia came to that idea, she raced over towards the stone wall.

She rolled up her skirt and tied it in place and set her foot on a rock that was sticking out. As she kept on sliding and nearly falling, she slowly climbed upwards.

She desperately reached her hand out towards the rose bud that had spread its thin roots out through the cracks of the rocks.

This wasn't the time to care about the spiky thorns, and so just when she was about to reach it, her foot lost its grip and Lydia went rapidly tumbling down.

Chapter 7 - The promises of the fairy world

Edgar fixed his eyes straight at the Wyrm and gripped his sword harder which he had held ready and pointed downwards.

He was watching the Wyrm's movements, thinking that the moment the Wyrm faced his direction and opened its mouth wide was the moment to aim for.

If the freya wasn't there, then it was the end of the story and he would be swallowed up whole by the Wyrm.

He wondered if he was doing something reckless. But even Lydia said she was going to break the rose with her hands even though she didn't know what that would do to herself.

What was he going to do if he couldn't protect that kind of girl.

He might have approached her in the beginning with the aim to take advantage and use her, but he didn't want to lost her ability and how she was stubborn and softhearted and strong-willed and serious and felt so fragile and soft and smelled like chamomile when he held her and how she would use her hands when she got angry at how he would try and get close to her.

That's why he had to do it.

The Wyrm was coming towards him.

It came charging along with its head and its mouth was only opened just a crack.

Edgar decided he should get by this and ran.

The pillar that the Wyrm crashed into and broke came nearly falling down onto him so he dodged it just barely.

When he moved his gaze, his eyes fell onto Lydia who was trying to climb up the rock wall.

What is she doing?

Or did she find the wild rose?

She should just wait quietly. But even though he thought that, there wasn't a time when Lydia would act as Edgar wanted her.

He sensed a shadow come over him and he shot his eyes upward.

The Wyrm's nails was coming down over him.

He rolled across the ground and managed to evade it.

He tried to hurry and stand up, and the Wyrm opened its mouth at him.

At the end of its long tongue, he saw there was red fluorite that shined so bright like it was a burning fire.

That's it. But, he held the sword ready too late.

The sharp fangs charged at him.

Just then, the Wyrm's movement suddenly dimmed.

In that short fraction of a second, Edgar recovered his balance and lowered his body and dodged the fangs.

As he did that, he steadied himself for the target and swung his sword aiming at the end of its tongue.

He felt a resistance as he cut and the fluorite cracked and shattered.

That second felt as it time had stopped.

The Wyrm's movements and the water sound that should have been ringing throughout the limestone cave; he was in a soundless world where everything didn't make a sound.

At the moment he finally heard noises again, he noticed the Wyrm's raised head slowly came falling down and he rushed to get out of its way.

It made a crashing sound and the Wyrm that fell down right in front of him didn't show any more signs of moving.

Lydia had sled down to the bottom of the cliff and hit her back, and got her body up as she fought against the pain.

She wanted to make sure what the reason was that it suddenly fell silent after the earthquake, and she squinted to look. However, she couldn't see past the area around her as it was blocked with a white dust that had blown up.

Where's Edgar? What happened?

"Lydia!"

Just then, she heard a voice call her name and saw that Edgar was running over to her direction.

"Edgar...., you're all right?"

"Yes, the dragon has died."

He knelt down on one knee and looked down at Lydia, but then he knit his brows and lifted up her hand.

What Lydia had gripped in her hand was a wilted wild rose.

Edgar shouldn't be able to see the rose. Only, he opened up Lydia's fist that had blood oozing out from between her fingers and his eyes gazed painfully at the cuts that were made by the thorns.

"You ripped the roses. So that's why the Wyrm moved so slowly. I was saved by you."

And then he pulled Lydia's head into his arms in a worried manner like he didn't know what was going to happen to her because she had broken the rose.

"Let's hurry and get out of here."

Lydia was also frightened. She didn't know herself, what was going to happen to her.

"Do I still have the body of a human?"

"You are not a changeling."

"It's only just begun."

They stood up.

The Wyrm's body, which lay motionless with its head stuck into the stone pillar forest with its body wrapped around in a circle began to turn to stone. At that same time, a faint fire came up from the forest stone pillars.

Like fireflies, the fire spread to one and another.

"What should be in the human world, should be returned to the human world.

They are the souls that were bound to this place by magic."

Edgar pulled Lydia's hand, who eyes were nearly taken away by the lights that were floating up into the skies.

"I heard something weird."

The noise sounded like waves, or something like a strong wind.

"The magic that was bottled up in the Wyrm's nest had lost its chain and was flowing out. It's going to come towards me as I was the one who snapped the thorn. If you stay by me, you'll be caught up in it. You won't be able to return..."

"What are you saying. We are always together. For now on."

He's saying the same thing again.

It was the same line that Edgar says on a whim. But they were in the fairy realm that was filled with magic, and because Lydia wasn't able to figure out what her true self was, she thought that was a rare will-power.

If one's will wins against magic, then their wish will be granted. That was the rule of the fairy realm.

If she was with him, then she might be able to return?

Lydia dashed off as her hand was pulled by Edgar.

However the sound of the wind was fast. Something warm came blowing up against them from behind them.

The faint light that was floating around, and Martha's baby who was nearly put to stone was also pushed along.

The landscape of the limestone was changed in a instant.

They were planning on going back the path they came in, but the two of them were standing in a narrow path between two precipice edges.

"What is going on?"

"It looks like we are caught in a magical delusion. Since the purpose of a fairy's magic is to confuse people's memories and senses."

"Anyways, let's keep moving."

Edgar pulled himself together and started to walk. And then he said,

"In a fairytale book I read just a while ago, there was this kind of story. A man went into the fairy world to retrieve his lover who was taken away and a friendly fairy gave him a word of advice. In order to return to the human world, he must keep going straight no matter what he saw. Until he got outside, he must not, at all costs, let go of his lover's hand. But the fairy's magic showed them frightening illusions one after another and tried to pull the two of them apart."

"I know that story. While that happened, the man saw his lover as a ferocious monster and doesn't he let his hand go of her. And then the two of them are separated from each other for eternity."

"......Was that so?"

So he hadn't read it to the end.

"How do I say it, children's tales are cruel. But I won't let go no matter what. In order to pass by the fairy's delusions, we need to believe in each other and keep moving straight and not let go, isn't that what it means? So in other words, that's what I wanted to say."

He really has the smart tongue.

Logically, it was just as Edgar said. However, it wasn't something easy. In order to dodge the delusionary magic, it mattered how strong the two of them were bonded together.

Doubt and fear was going to confuse the heart.

Betty and Pino were sure to be all right. However, Lydia has never established an emotional bond with Edgar.

Still holding each other's hands, Lydia became scared as they walked along the narrow precipice.

She wondered when and what kind of opportunity was going to make him let go of Lydia. She was afraid of that moment and so she was overwhelmed with the urge for her to be the one to run off.

What if my body might change into a fairy? Because to the human eye, she might appear like an ugly monster.

"What is the matter?"

Edgar turned around with a look of worry at Lydia who sudden started to slow down her pace.

"I-I don't have any confidence that I will be able to win against the magic. Because, I don't have any ground in the human world. In the beginning I didn't know what kind of existence and which world I was from."

"That's why I am with you. I will become a root for you and a life line for you to get out of here."

Her grip of his hand became weak and nearly fell out, but he gripped hers tightly.

"Lydia, don't hesitate."

It might be impossible.

Because I am not the most important person to you.

See, already, I'm this unstable.

Lydia couldn't think for a long time that Edgar's words were serious. But that wasn't because of his cheating habits.

She had realized it, and yet to believe was something she couldn't possibly do.

"Edgar, if you're going to end up letting go of my hand, then let go now. If it was now, then I can feel all right about it."

"All right? That's horrible of you. If I lose you, then I wouldn't be all right at all."

The more he said such soft, kind words to her, the more Lydia slowly wanted to believe in him.

Even now, she wanted to believe him.

I want to go home with him like this. If that happens, then I would be able to act more honest from now on.

But, does he really want that, she wondered.

If she hesitated for even a second, the delusionary magic would sneak into that opening in her heart.

"Lydia, don't believe in that man's words. You're only going to be put through pain later on."

Near the rocks above them, there was Kelpie in his black horse form.

"Come with me. You now plenty already, that in the fairy world there is nothing there that would hurt you."

Yes, that's true.

Her feet that were walking forward began to feel heavier. She was just barely able to be pulled along by Edgar.

"To me, there is only you. Since I don't have any interest in other humans, or even fairies."

Is he really Kelpie?

But, nothing seemed to be seen by Edgar who continued to move forward and it looked like he wasn't hearing anything either.

Then is that an illusionary magic?

The landscape around them shifted. Lydia wasn't able to move anymore, and slumped down to the ground.

Even so, Edgar tried to pick her up and make her stand.

Just then, she saw a person's figure down below.

When she squinted her eyes to look at the path at the bottom of the cliff, the one who lay unmoving there on her side was Ermine.

"Edgar, it's Ermine!"

At Lydia's cry, Edgar peered down at the ground below them and it seemed like he also saw her. She could feel his tension through their hands which were held. "She needs to be helped."

"No...., it's impossible. There is nothing we can do for her now."

That was because he was holding onto Lydia's hand.

"I will be fine," said Lydia, trying to be careful not to talk with a shaking voice.

"If it was for just a little while, then it will be all right to let go of my hand. I'll be waiting here. I'll wait here so that we don't lose our way while you go help Ermine and return."

Edgar remained still like he was unsure as he looked at Lydia.

".....Really?"

If he lost Ermine like this, then that would deeply hurt Edgar again. Much more than Lydia disappearing.

"Yes."

As she nodded, Lydia whispered Goodbye to him in her heart.

Edgar's grip loosened.

Lydia lowered her face and took in a deep breath. When their hands separated, she felt the pressuring sensation of the magic that was going to come crushing onto her.

She closed her eyes.

Suddenly, she couldn't sense Edgar's presence.

"What are you doing Earl! Don't let go of her!"

At Nico's cry, Edgar came to his senses.

In the next second, there was a strong gust of wind, and it was so violent like he was thrown into the middle of a tornado and so he wasn't able to open his eyes, however, he desperately tried to reach and grab Lydia's hand that he was just about to let go.

He felt that he grabbed it, and pulled her to him.

He caught Lydia's body that unexpectedly came falling helplessly into his arms, and that made Edgar sense something strange and looked down into her face.

"Lydia, what happened? Wake up."

Her body and her eyes that were closed didn't show any signs of moving.

"I was too late," said Nico who came running to them as he was out of breath.

The place where Edgar was, wasn't near any precipice but inside the limestone cave where the sea water was coming into view.

He hadn't realized it, but it looked to be night and the limestone cave where the moonlight came shining into made the lime shimmer, making the area lit up enough to see clearly.

Ermine was no where to be seen.

He finally realized that she was an illusion. He was tricked by the fairy's magic and nearly made to let go of Lydia's hand.

No, although it was just for a second, he had let go of her.

Because Lydia told him that it would be all right even if they let go for just a little while. No, Lydia must have known this was going to happen before she said that.

So that Edgar wouldn't have to hesitate in going to save Ermine.

Even Edgar should have known that although it was just a second, he shouldn't let his feeling or hand get separated from Lydia.

He held her as she lay lifeless in his arms and slumped down to the ground.

"It was too late? But Lydia is here. She's breathing and she has a pulse."

"Because that's like her remains. Lydia's soul has been taken by the fairy world."

"Nico, you have to help her. Isn't there anything you can do."

"Since I'm a fairy, I don't have any power to pull her back to the human realm." He placed his paws on his hips and let out a deep sigh.

"Sorry, Earl. You best hurry and go back. Get on that small boat there. Once you're on the sea water, it'll be the human world."

Then, this bank here must be right next to the border. In just a step, they were about to get outside.

He was so vexed and pressed her body against his, but there was no response.

"You should leave that behind. It can't be taken outside with you, and its just something that will disappear when you let go of it."

"Then, I'm staying here. I'm going keep staying."

"......I see, well, you're free to do as you like," lightly said the cat without any pity.

Edgar intended to stay here.

Lydia told him to go save Ermine and that she was going to wait here, but at the same time she looked so lonely and sad. Maybe she might have wished, even just a little, that Edgar would realize her lie.

Even if she wasn't wishing, then all the more, he should have noticed. How she looked so pressed and on the verge.

Even as he tied her down using an engagement and if he were thinking of protecting her at all costs and seriously try to love in exchange, then he should have realized it.

He wasn't able to use the sword and at this rate, wouldn't be able to completely protect Lydia, and because he was hesitating, he wasn't decided on one or the other, that was why it ended up like this.

He wanted to keep her tied to the human world and support her because she had no attachments and because she was so softhearted that she would give up being able to go back home for the sake of others and so worked so hard for people and fairies.

He said that to her a number of times, but he wondered if that ended up as a lie.

Nico had said that her body here was just remains, but he didn't want to leave her here alone and wanted to stay by her side for always, and so he combed her smooth caramel-colored hair.

Because he promised that he would stay of her side.

Edgar brought her hand that he clutched up near his mouth and let his eyes roam across to the moonstone engagement ring.

The soft milky-white light flickered faintly.

He realized something. Couldn't this ring act to stop Lydia's soul from not leaving?

It was a ring of a guardian fairy. By its power, it should be promised that Lydia would stay in the position as Edgar's fiancée.

The power of the ring should be fighting against the power that was trying to pull Edgar and Lydia apart.

"Lydia."

As he called to her, he closed his eyes.

And then, he felt her presence just by him.

Dimly, he sensed the sight of her on his eyelids. She stood like she was completely lost and was looking around herself to see if anything was around her.

Lydia was still here.

She heard Edgar's voice in her ears, however because she wasn't able to see where he was, she was tilting her head a little. He could even see that expression on her.

Edgar? Where are you?

He sensed her voice.

"Right here. Right next to you."

.....So, you're very far.

Maybe it was a far distance for Lydia.

"Lydia, I'm feeling really hurt. In how you went and made a lie so that I would let go of my hand."

But it's to save Ermine.

She murmured weakly.

"You were wrong, we only saw an illusion of Ermine. Most likely, I must have been tested on my feelings for you. But, don't you think it was not fair. You said that it would be all right."

Yes, it wasn't fair of me.

"If I knew I was going to lose you, I wouldn't have let go even if it killed me."

I didn't want to make it painful for you.

"Then, can you tell how much pain I am in right now? If I can't return with you, then I don't have any wish to go back. I don't mind if I stay here and die."

.....You wouldn't let yourself die for my sake.

"Then you can just watch there. Until you know it isn't a lie."

Suddenly, Lydia lost her composure with nervousness.

He couldn't tell what her real feelings were. But right now, he could only take advantage of the softhearted part of her.

From the moment they first met, she wasn't able to abandon Edgar who was in trouble. Even if he was going to take advantage of that kind part of her, he wanted to get her back that much.

"Lydia, you are still here with me. To drive away the fairy's magic, we should put our hearts together, then we should be able to return home. Let's go back together. Please wish that you want to go home for my sake."

.....I was wishing that I could return.

Her face twisted into sadness.

If it was all right in believing in you, then I had wished to go home together. "Yes."

With his eyes closed and still feeling Lydia's heart, Edgar gripped her lifeless hand tightly.

It was impossible because they weren't real lovers. Although she thought that, if they were able to drive away the illusionary magic and able to return back, then I was thinking of honestly accepting what you say.



"Then our hearts are one."

Lydia was troubled at how to respond, but Edgar didn't pay any heed and continued to speak.

"I'll never let you go."

In the next second, the moonstone gave out a shining bright light.

The light of the moonstone was so bright that one could tell even with their eyes closed as that white light filled his view.

Edgar felt her hand softly grip his hand back and he opened his eyes.

He was feeling how Lydia, in his arms and her golden-green eyes that were facing him were like a precious treasure.



"Yes, I mean really, I have no idea how it happened, but in the next moment I was standing in front of the landlord's house."

In one of the landlord's rooms, Lota was resting down in a bathtub that was set

out in front of the hearth and spoke as she blew out a puff of smoke from her cigarette.

"That's because the changeling magic was broken. Remember, Lota how you exchanged with Betty and was made the changeling. That's why you were naturally returned to the place where you were meant to be," said Lydia as she dried her hair that was just washed with a towel.

"That was easy for you. As Pino and I were walking together, we were being followed by frightening monsters."

Betty let out the hot water that was in pail out onto the top of Lota's head. Lota smartly lifted up one of her arms so that the light of her cigarette wouldn't go out.

"Hmm, is that what happened. But, didn't Pino protect you safely."

"Yes. I finally found out what his true feelings were. Although it was quite a long roundabout way to it."

With an embarrassed face, Betty smiled.

"It took too long."

Lota, and even Lydia was made to smile.

The three of them who returned from the Wyrm's nest washed off the dust and dirt on them and were just finally settling down in relaxation.

Then Nico came in where they were with a brush in his hand.

"Hey, Lydia, would you brush the fur on my back."

Inside the limestone cave, when Lydia's consciousness returned, Nico, who was by Edgar's side was as filthy as a cat on the streets.

Their eyes met each others and Lydia, who said "You look awful", instead of reacting in rage, he just was appalled at her.

Rather, he might have been appalled at how Lydia easily came back when she was called by Edgar.

He only said that he wanted to hurry and get washed, and went ahead to go back home.

Lydia combed his gray fur that had its shine returned to it in front of a large mirror and looked at herself curiously at how in the end she still had the body of a human. She wondered if she might not be a changeling. Or she didn't know if this was the result of the moonstone of the guardian fairy protecting her so that the changeling magic casted on her wouldn't be broken.

Because the immeasurable power that was stored in the moonstone had made it so that Lydia would remain in the form that the Blue Knight Earl had desired of his fiancée.

"Misses, shall I add more hot water?"

Miss Tyler came into the room. They heard that her baby who was put through the changeling had returned back to her.

"Martha, you don't have to work so hard at a time like this. Please stay by your baby's side."

Looking at Lydia, she loosened up her eyes that reflected her strong will.

"My baby is sleeping right now so I am all right. And besides, I wanted to show my thanks to the earl and everyone. Even the villagers, after they learned that they don't have to do as the mayor and the fake landlord tells them, they are here because they want to do something to help."

Lydia just honestly thought thank goodness.

Just a little earlier, the dobie mother also appeared and was carrying her baby and looked so happy and had thanked Lydia.

The dobie clan had left behind a large fish in the footsteps of the landlord mansion as their thanks to the Blue Knight Earl for defeating the Wyrm.

But still, that didn't mean all the problems were solved.

Raven had returned just a little after Lydia and the others and he showed his disappointment that Ermine wasn't able to be rescued out.

Edgar said that they could only wait.

Lydia asked the dobies for help and had them search every corner inside the limestone cave. If she couldn't be found, then it meant Ermine was able to move around and she should eventually return on her own.

However, they couldn't rest easy until they saw her themselves, and Edgar looked calm at first glance, but when Lydia imagined how worried he was, that made her heart ache.

The Ermine they saw lying at the bottom of the cliff was just an illusionary

magic spell that had entered into the openings in Lydia and Edgar's hearts.

But because it was such a realistic-looking illusion, the ominous feeling couldn't be wiped away from her mind.

"When you are finished getting dressed, then please come to the salon. I will have tea and something to eat prepared for you," said Martha on her way out.

Lota and Betty let out thrills of joy.

When she finished brushing Nico from the tip of his tail carefully, Nico inspected himself in the mirror and narrowed his eyes in satisfied delight.

"Well then, I'll be going off to the banquet of the dobies."

"Don't drink too much."

Seeing Nico off and turning back around, she saw that Lota had gotten out of the tube and was getting ready to change.

Betty pulled up her coffee-colored hair and tied it in a tail at the top of her head like usual.

She was quite swift in doing it. Lydia could easily imagine that the two of them had set each other's hairs ever since they were young children.

"Lydia, I'll set your hair as well. It'll be a bother if you leave it wet."

Betty grabbed Lydia by her shoulders without giving her anytime to object and made her sit down in a chair.

"That's such an adorable dress. Is that his taste?" said Lota in a teasing tone.

Her own clothing had become so filthy and she didn't have any other change of clothes, so Lydia was dressed in the rich-daughter like dress that she was wearing when she first arrived here.

But, for some reason, it looked like she was dressing herself up pretty for Edgar's sake.

As her hair was being fixed, Lydia felt that more and more convincing.

In no time, Betty had woven Lydia's hair up beautifully and decorated it with a ribbon.

"Now that's perfect. But, Lydia, you really are not living up to your worth with that man."

"Yup," agreed Lota.

"But, well, you can say that he has become a little bit more worthy? I thought

that when he came back bringing you along."

Even after they left the limestone cave, and even when they got up on land, and even when they came into view of the landlord mansion, the one that was still worried of letting go of the other's hand might have not of just been Lydia, but anyhow, the two of them kept a tight grip of each other's hand and Lydia remembered how they were walking so close, shoulder-to-shoulder and it made her turn red.

"W-we aren't in that kind of....."

Even as she said that, how they returned from the fairy world together made this night feel a little different from any normal night and made her fidgety.

"Telling you the truth, even if he had a woman he was courting, he always had a number of others he was fooling around with, and it looked like he didn't have a grain of feeling guilty about that. But, I hear that even as he is proposing to you, he feels guilt towards fooling around. Don't you think that quite a step forward?"

"Lota, how come you would know something like that?"

Betty tilted her head.

"Just a while ago in London, I saw him enter into a house that was across the street from a bookstore. Lydia, didn't you see that as well?"

"Huh, why do you know....."

As she said that, Lydia suddenly remembered. At that time, there was a girl who was looking at Lydia who had yelled out in a loud voice.

"That was you Lota?"

"But, Lydia, he came out by himself immediately. I had thought that the husband who should have been out had returned home ahead of them. But now, I feel like he thought it over himself."

"R-really?"

"And then, he went into some club. That's the end of what I know though."

She wondered if how he said that he was at Slade's club till morning was actually true.

But she didn't know if that was because of the guilt he could have felt towards Lydia.

She didn't know, but she was a little relieved.

"Now then, let's hurry to go for tea."

Lota had finished pulling on her boots and energetically stood up.

In that moment, Lydia had the faint thought to look outside the window. There was quite a magnificent carriage parked outside.

Lydia was familiar with the figure who stepped out of it, and she let out a gasp.

Betty and Lota came rushing over and peered outside the window.

"Who is it?"

"That old gentleman, he's the Grand Duke of Cremona."

What, said Lota and Betty and they looked at each other.

The three of them were positioned themselves by the salon door and quietly pricked their ears to listen on what was going on inside.

It seemed like the Grand Duke was inside, but they couldn't hear very clearly.

When Lota opened the door a crack, the delicious aroma of sweets came flowing out and it tinkled Lydia's appetite.

However, it still wasn't a situation where they could enjoy themselves with those sweets.

Even though she thought it was improper of her, when they peeked inside, they saw that the old gentleman was shaking hands with Edgar.

And then suddenly, Edgar turned to face towards the door.

"Lydia, come on inside."

Being called, Lydia panicked, but she couldn't run off when she was noticed, so she walked quietly into the room.

Because the Grand Duke looked at her with such gentle eyes, she relaxed with relief and bobbed.

"Your Excellency, thank you so much for saving me the other day."

"Oh, no, no, have your wounds healed? I had heard that you had rescued my granddaughter, and I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart."

It seemed like Edgar had called for the Grand Duke. He must have told him about the situation about a fake earl existing.

However, when it came to now there was no fluorite ring so she wondered if the Grand Duke would accept her as his grandchild. "Lydia, would you bring the princess here."

Now that she recalled, Edgar should be under the impression that Betty was the princess.

"Umm, Edgar, before that, I have something to tell you,"

Lota was saying that she might want to meet her grandfather. However, for Lota who was raised by pirates, her fear of being rejected should be strong.

On top of that, if the Grand Duke became confused about not knowing if Betty or Lota was the real princess, then there would be no tearful reunion.

"Is something the matter?"

"Uh, to tell you the true, the two of them were exchanging positions...."

"Oh, I know that."

"Eh?"

"Although I was also deceived for a long time."

Just then, the door opened.

Lota and Betty both came walking into the room.

The two of them were both silent.

Since there was no crested ring as proof, it seemed like Lota was going to silently wait until the Grand Duke would realize who his real granddaughter was.

The Grand Duke was at first a little taken aback at two young girls entering, but he was quick to focus his eyes on one of them.

"The right is Lota and the left is Betty. Can you tell who your granddaughter is?" When Edgar said that, he didn't show any hesitation and walked forward and took the hands of one of them.

"It is really you."

Lota, who was said that opened her eyes wide in surprise. However, she quickly lowered her eyes at not knowing what to do.

"I've lost the crested ring. But would you still think me as your grandchild?"

"You are a living reflection of your mother. There's no mistake. And the name Lota...., all of us in the family called you by that."

"If it was a child around three-years-old, then it wouldn't be a surprise that she would say her name when she was rescued," said Edgar and smiled at Lydia

who was making a confused face.

"Eh, but the Grand Duke didn't say his grandchild's name was Lota."

"He said that she was Charlotte. They speak Italian in Cremona, so that would make it Carlotta. Which means her nickname is Lota. So when she was young, she remembered others calling her by her nickname they normally used."

So from the time Edgar met the Grand Duke, he had realized that Betty and Lota had exchanged places.

"Lota, although your country doesn't exist anymore, would you stay by my side from now on. I had thought that I didn't have anyone who I could call family left, but you were the only one who remained alive."

"But I was raised by the captain of pirates. I have no right to be grandpa's grandchild."

"They were the people who raised you up till now didn't they? I only have feelings of gratitude to them."

Making a relieved face, Betty backed away and walked over towards Pino who was standing in the doorway. The bear of a man was on the verge of tears. As she soothed him down, they quietly left.

And Lydia as well, was urged by Edgar and left the salon.

Moving over to another room, Lydia was finally able to have a moment to relax with some tea and sweets.

Right next to her, Edgar was eyeing her readily.

His gaze was so hot and longing, that Lydia, who brought her cup of milk tea to her lips suddenly became embarrassed and lowered her cup.

"I wonder what Lota is going to do from now. Can one abandon one's post as the head of a crew of pirates that easily?"

"If Pino gets married with Betty, then wouldn't there be no problem if he took up the ship? Since it's the ship of the previous captain, so that means it belongs to Betty who is his daughter."

Oh, I see. So Betty was a daughter of a pirate.

Now that I recall, she had quite the bravery it seemed. It looked like she was dodging the eye of the Wyrm and loaf out on her duties.

As she was having a strange feeling like she understood now, and when she

brought her eyes up, she met with Edgar's eyes again.

".....Aren't you going to eat?"

"I'm tasting the sweet happiness of being by your side again."

When they became alone, it was normal that he started his moves of seducing her. However, this time, Lydia was nervous more than she ever was.

That was because she was at quite a disadvantage.

She wanted think about Edgar seriously and that was why she had said she wanted to go home.

She had broken the wile rose and the fact itself of escaping that place was absolutely saying that she had perfect trust towards Edgar already.

He was sure to point that part out, and if he did....

"Lydia, it is all right for me not to have to give up on you, right."

She couldn't reject him completely like she could before.

Edgar took away the cup from Lydia's hand while she was silent and put it back on the table.

She didn't know what to do with her empty hands and she gazed in a daze up to his face.

All this time, Lydia had thought of Edgar as a skirt-chasing cheater. That he wasn't a person who could love just one woman.

However, if it turned out that wasn't the case.

Perhaps, just like Betty in the past, he might be putting a bet on Lydia to see if he could become serious about her.

If that happened, maybe he might be feeling that he would be able to unbound himself about Ermine.

Most likely, there was no necessity for that one person to be Lydia, but because he was having a dim feeling of love towards her and so he might be trying to build up from those feelings into seriousness.

And when it came to Lydia's side, the only reason she was able to keep on rejecting him all this time was just on the point that he was a half-hearted person. If he wasn't half-hearted, then she worried that there wouldn't be any other good reason to reject him.

If he became a man who could care for someone so hard that he would seal

away his feelings for the one person he loved, then she might just fall in love with him.

They supported each other in order to defeat the Wyrm and pledged to go back home together and if she wanted to believe in him, then Lydia was thinking about something like that.

Even now, she was thinking that as she was watching Edgar press his body forward.

She wondered what would happen if she came to love him.

His eyes were bordered with golden-colored lashes and reflected Lydia in them kindly and his finely sculptured lips gently held a smile.

"Don't make such a scared face."

"Eh...."

It seemed like she was being too daunted. But Lydia remained stiff and was apparently glaring back at Edgar.

"Well, then, could you close your eyes. Then you won't be scared."

Hey, what are you planning on doing?

.....Or was that a stupid question to ask.

However, suddenly there was a sound of knocking, and Lydia who was so tight and tense as a stretched string was made to jerk her shoulders.

"Lord Edgar, my sister has returned."

At the same time Raven reported that, Edgar had stood up.

When they saw Ermine bowing her head in the doorway, he rushed to walk over to her and wrapped his arms around her like he would to a family member.

"Thank goodness, I was really worried. If you were a human being, it wasn't a place that you could possibly survive through."

"I am terribly sorry. I had lost my way."

"That's all right, as long as you are safe."

Lydia also felt relief and stood up.

"Ermine, I'm so sorry. You went through such danger to save me."

"No, it was my duty. The most important thing was that Miss Carlton would be safe."

It looked like she had taken off her coat and was only wearing her shirt and vest

on top. She must have fallen into the sea as the smell of salt drifted out from her clothes that were not completely dry yet.

Lydia happened to notice there was a red-colored stain on one of her cuffs.

"Ermine, are you injured?"

But as she nearly said that, she remembered that her selkie blood would instantly turn into something like clear sand.

Which means it was someone else's, like a human's blood.

"......I had found the mayor's corpse," she said, turning to face Edgar.

"There were two villagers who had dragged his body up from the sea and was searching his clothes, and it looked like they were trying to take something from him. When I called out to them, they came out to attack me, so I defended myself."

"They must have been searching for the freya," said Edgar with a stern expression.

Prince had apparently ordered Ulysess to awaken the Wyrm so that he could get his hands on that.

The fire fluorite, or freya turned out to be the Wyrm's weakness and might have been very close to magic itself that a fairy would posses.

"Then what about those two?"

"They managed to escape."

"Along with the freya?"

".....Most likely."

Edgar let out a sigh. But still, he made a smile as if he still appreciated the pain she had taken.

"You have been through so much trouble."

She shook her head to the sides softly. To Lydia she looked like she could fall down at any moment.

"Ermine, you don't look well."

Her eyes wavered for an instant, like she had lost her composure.

"It's all right for you to retire to your courters. It's best you let your body rest."

She made a bow and left the room. Raven followed after her and closed the door.

"I wonder if she's all right."

"Yes, me too."

Seeing the side of his face that looked a little worried, the rapid beating that was filling Lydia's heart turned into pain.

Maybe it isn't such a good thing to love him.

Edgar reached his hand out to Lydia like he was going to continue where he had just left off. But he looked unsure as he did so, which made Lydia turn her face away.

He looked at Lydia with a painful face.

"Are you also tired?"

"Eh? Uh, yes, I think so. There was so much I went through...."

"I see. Then you had better take a good rest tonight."

Because he so easily backed away and as Lydia watched the back of him walk off, she remained standing there, surprised at what just happened.

Is that all?

If it was how it was in the past, then he would normally keep on trying to seduce even if she openly showed her dislike. And yet why on this night, did he let himself go off so easily.

And you said that you would never let go of my hand.

Lydia sat down onto a chair and as she drank her tea that had turned cold, she began to feel suffocated like there was something stuck in the back of her heart.

I wonder if he was worried about how Ermine seemed.

Yes, that must be it.

That's how life is, but as she thought that, she suddenly became depressed.

This is just like when they saw that illusion.

For Ermine's sake, Edgar nearly let go of Lydia's hand.

And yet he still desperately tried to get back Lydia and because she felt those feelings of his wasn't a lie, she was here now.

That's why, for tonight, Lydia was thinking on being honest with her own feelings.

And not just hell-bent on rejecting him.

Like if he were to desire a kiss from her, she would try and think about not hitting him or run away.

"Ohhh, geesh, stupid, stupid! I am a complete idiot!"

"What are you yelling out about?"

Kelpie came into the room through the window. With haste, she tried to fix her composure, but since it was Kelpie, there really wasn't that much of a need to worry about her manners.

".....Nothing is wrong."

He came over next to Lydia and plopped his hand on her head freely and peered down to look into her face.

"In the end, you're still a human. It's too bad, but it can't be helped."

"Now that I remember, thank you for helping me. Were you all right from the Wyrm's fire?"

"Do I look like I have any problems?"

"Not at all."

"Well, that's that. So, are you having tea by yourself? How unusual."

Lota was with the Grand Duke and Betty was with Pino, and they were reflecting on all the things that happened and must be spending their time peacefully.

Edgar.....might be where Ermine is.

Lydia also went through quite a few things, but she was alone now.

But, I was always like this.

"Everyone is busy."

"Then, I'll spend time with you."

Kelpie settled down on the table and grabbed ahold of a scone and threw it into his open mouth.

Even as she thought there were no manners at all in his behavior, Lydia still chuckled.

Whenever it is, it was always fairies than people that were by her side.

That's why it might have been better that she wasn't been made advances by Edgar tonight.

It wasn't like it was decided that she was going to fall in love with Edgar yet to

the point that she would accept his proposal, but she was nearly made to feel like they were lovers.

But when she thought about it more closely, if she did come to love him, then Lydia's feelings would be one-sided forever.

Even if they got married and he stopping cheating, she wouldn't be his number one.

I have to be calm.

I don't want to think that it might have been better that I didn't return to this world.

It wasn't Edgar's fault that she was put in sad feelings.

At the least in that moment, from the bottom of her heart Lydia had wished that she could return with him and he should have wished for the same thing as well.

Unlike fairies who went through no changes, the human world was easy to shift and people's heart would sway and move on.

Even if she knew that, Lydia might not have been that strong enough to think she liked him.



In the old days, the Blue Knight Earl was begged by villagers and sealed away a dragon Wyrm.

And he must have hidden the fire fluorite, freya that was its weakness somewhere in the village.

The one who came later was the brothers that carried the earl's blood. They knew where the dragon's freya was and that if they used it, it would once again awaken the dragon.

The older brother only used his talent for sculptures to increase the value of the fluorites.

However, the younger brother was different.

It seemed like the red fluorite, freya that the dragon creates has another special use to it.

The mayor claimed that it was the stone of immortality and it could only be handled by those who carry the blood of the Blue Knight Earl, but Edgar didn't

know what kind of method it was to gain such an outcome, so didn't know if it was true or not.

Anyhow, the younger brother had revived the dragon and thought to once again make it so that freyas could be mined.

The older brother who sensed the danger in that had entrusted the only fluorite that was able to revive the dragon to the far away Cremon dukedom.

Molding it into a ring that had the crest carved into it.

Before he was killed by his younger brother.

The young man Ulysess that Edgar knew, could he be the son of that younger brother?

He gave the impression like he had gone through special education and brainwashing, but he still must be a part of the bloodline.

Anyhow, Ulysess who became a pawn for Prince still carried the blood of the Blue Knight Earl and wasn't killed because he turned his allegiance to Prince.

And then he searched and found the fluorite that was sent to the Cremona dukedom in secret, and revived the dragon.

In the end, it looked like the freya was carried out of the village. The two villagers that Ermine was talking about still was no where to be found.

If that stone ends up in the hands of Prince then I wonder if that would make him not die.

I wouldn't want that to happen, thought Edgar.

Putting that aside, mysteries kept on increasing.

Even if the dragon was defeated, it was mostly thanks to Lydia and for Edgar who couldn't bring out the power of the merrow's sword against a fairy, there still was no guarantee that he could keep on fighting.

And it still was unknown what he should do with Lydia.

Edgar was standing out on the balcony as he looked out at the sea which the morning sun reflected out over and he shivered in cold and entered back into the room.

It just when Raven came in to announce that the morning meal is ready.

"Lord Edgar, I will be going to the village postal office, but do you have any other duties for me?"

"Postal office? To do what?"

"To send out the letter that Miss Carlton asked of me."

"Who is the letter addressed out to?"

Even if he thought he was breeching her privacy, when it came to Lydia, he became too curious and ended up asking.

"To her father, Professor Carlton. It seems she is informing him that she will go back to Scotland from here and will be spending the holiday with him."

That was a complete bolt from the blue. Holiday? Echoed Edgar back to him.

"She said she got the approval already for an early Christmas holiday. Did you not approve of it?"

I have never heard that.

With his coat in his hand, he tried to hurry out of the room.

"Um, Miss Carlton has already departed long ago."

"You let her go?"

There was no fault in Raven. However, Edgar was completely confused. Why, why was the only thing that came to his mind.

"I haven't approved for time off for the holidays. Why didn't you give me any word of this?"

"It was still dark before morning. If he was told he didn't have to wake his master, then your loyal servant would take the word of your fiancée Lydia."

Without giving a knock, Lota came into the man's private courters. And then she held out a piece of paper in front of his eyes.

"The holiday request form of Lydia's. I've made sure to hand it to you."

".....But it's still November."

"It seems like you put her through hard work, so shouldn't she have the right to rest for a month and a half until Christmas is over?"

The strength had completely disappeared from his body, and Edgar slumped down onto the sofa.

"Besides that, why is it you that she entrusts to submit her form?"

"Because I was the one who suggested the idea to Lydia. About the idea of getting a holiday break from here and spending some time away from you. I pushed that once you have the idea, it's best she go through with it before she

was talked out of it."

"Whaat?"

His open mouth didn't shut back closed.

"It's because I let it slip to Lydia that you might have become a little more decent. But, don't you feel that you haven't changed that much since the time with Betty? I felt the guilt of making Lydia become depressed."

Lydia was depressed?

She didn't show any such signs, so Edgar had no idea what Lota was talking about.

"I thought you didn't make any slips or blunders with women, but I was wrong." That made him irritated, and so he raised his brow and glared at Lota.

"Or is it, that you can't think calm and straight when it comes to Lydia?"

"You go and get in other people's love affairs, and what is it that you want to say?"

"Till late in the night, there were quite a number of fairies partying in her room. Although I could only see the black-wavy haired one and cat, it seemed quite lively and loud so there must have been quite a number of little ones there too. So, I thought why you weren't there with her."

"I had said to Lydia that it's best she rested. Shouldn't she be tired?"

"Yes, she did go through a hectic day for someone. She needed to save Betty and me, and Martha's baby, everyone all at once, and she couldn't turn to anyone when it came to fairies."

She was correct. Lydia tried to do it on her own and was prepared that she might not be able to return.

That's why Edgar thought he definitely didn't want to leave her by herself. Even if he didn't have any power to fight against fairies, he believed he could stay by Lydia's side at least.

And then he realized.

That last night, she was all alone.

"I had thought that you would stay by her side. Since the two of you broke through the danger together, then all the more you are the only one who knows all the trouble she went through. I had imagined that you were flirting with her and then Lydia would completely forget about all the frightening memories and I thought that would make her relaxed and be able to rest."

Edgar could only remain silent. However, it wasn't like he thoughtlessly made her be by herself.

He was thinking about shortening the distance between him and Lydia all at once, but he hesitated because he felt like he still didn't have the right to do that.

He wasn't able to retrieve the freya and still didn't know what kind of mysterious power it held.

He didn't know how he was going to continue protecting Lydia against Ulysess who carried the blood of the real Blue Knight Earl.

He didn't want to let her go and yet he wasn't able to step in towards her.

Lydia was willing to face him heart-to-heart but Edgar had ran away.

"Lydia had a smile on her face. She said that fairies are the only ones that would stay by her side."

She had come back because she decided to believe in humans, in Edgar, but it was fairies who were beside her.

That.....was sure to hurt her.

"That girl, because she could see fairies, I heard that she was made fun of a lot. But, just like that she must have always smiled about it. I wish that Lydia would become happy with a man who she considers the most dearest. That's why I can't entrust you as you are right now with Lydia."

"Are you considering yourself as Lydia's guardian?"

"As a friend. Lydia is not like Betty. You seduce her with such thin feelings, but from her point, she only has one of the two options of rejecting you or seriously loving you."

Her words were bitter through and through. Lota looked to be completely enraged with Edgar.

Thin feelings, that's not how I feel.

Even if he thought that, he couldn't retaliate, and so Edgar was left to remain alone.

"Shall I go after Miss Carlton?" asked Raven, who apparently was still remaining

where he was.

"....No, right now, I don't feel like I can properly seduce her."

Raven bowed and left the room.

It was definite that he gained a step closer to Lydia. And with that, Edgar thought that he might change her destiny and that made him unnerved.

He was completely half-hearted.

Because he wasn't making the his choice, and when they were thrown inside the magic of the fairy, Lydia had gone out for Edgar's sake so that he could let go of her hand.

He pledged to his heart because he wanted to save her, and if it was for Lydia, then he wouldn't lose to the illusionary magic of the fairy, but it was Edgar who made her make that kind of lie.

He wanted to protect her but he was hurting her. At this rate, she was only going to go through alienation in the human world, and on day she might leave his side.

"What should I do?"

Even if he asked himself about what to do, he just couldn't think about making himself put distance between her.

In the end, he was thinking about how he could make this misconduct of his erased.

And as he thought, if it was a holiday break then she would be coming back, right?

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